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SERMONS on CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE by FREDERICK·W ROBERTSON

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The following is a list of the works of F. W. Robertson :-

Address delivered at Opening of Working Men's Institute, Brigh 1849; Two Lectures on the Influence of Poetry on the Wor Classes, 1852; Lectures and Addresses on Literary and Social To 1858; Translation of Lessing's "Education of the Human Ra 1858; Expository Lectures on St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinth 1859; Analysis of "In Memoriam," 1862; Sermons preached at Tr Chapel, Brighton, 4 series, 1855-63; 5th series, 1890; Letters (Life), ed. S. A. Brooke, 1865; A Few Extracts from the I Poetical Works of F. W. R., 1870 (?), privately printed; Lite Remains (including Lectures, Addresses, and other Writings), 1

SERMONS ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

BAPTISM

GALATIANS iii. 26–29.—"For ye are all the children of God by faith Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ e put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither d nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in rist Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and rs according to the promise."

WHEREVER opposite views are held with warmth by igious-minded men, we may take for granted that there some higher truth which embraces both. All high truth the union of two contradictories. Thus predestination d freewill are opposites: and the truth does not lie tween these two, but in a higher reconciling truth which ves both true. So with the opposing views of baptism. en of equal spirituality are ready to sacrifice all to assert, to deny, the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. And truth, I believe, will be found, not in some middle, derate, timid doctrine, which skilfully avoids extremes, t in a truth larger than either of these opposite views, ich is the basis of both, and which really is that for ich each party tenaciously clings to its own view, as to a tter of life and death.

The present occasion[1] only requires us to examine three ws.

[1] The decision of the Privy Council on the Gorham case.

I. That of Rome.
II. That of modern Calvinism.
III. That of (as I believe) Scripture and the Churc
England.

I. The doctrine of Rome respecting baptism. We
take her own authorities.

1. "If any one say that the sin of Adam . . .
taken away, either by the powers of human nature o
any other remedy than the merit of the One Mediator
Lord Jesus Christ . . . . . or denies that the mer
Jesus Christ, duly conferred by the sacrament of baptis
the church form, is applied to adults as well as to chil
—let him be accursed." Sess. v. 4.

"If any one deny that the imputation of original s
remitted by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, w
is conferred in baptism, or even asserts that the who
that which has the true and proper character of sin, is
taken away, but only not imputed—let him be accur
Sess. v. 5.

"If any one say that grace is not given by sacramen
this kind always and to all, so far as God's part is concer
but only at times, and to some, although they be
received—let him be accursed."

"If any one say that by the sacraments of the
Covenant themselves, grace is not conferred by the eff
of the rite (opus operatum), but that faith alone is suffi
for obtaining grace—let him be accursed."

"If any one say that in three sacraments, *i. e.* bap
confirmation, and orders, a character is not impressed
the soul, *i. e.* a certain spiritual and indelible mark (for w
reason they cannot be repeated)—let him be accursed."
vii. cap. 7–9.

"By baptism, putting on Christ, we are made a
creation in Him, obtaining plenary and entire remissio
all sins."

It is scarcely possible to misrepresent the doctrin
plainly propounded. Christ's merits are instrume

plied by baptism : original sin is removed by a change of ture : a new character is imparted to the soul : a germinal inciple or seed of life is miraculously given ; and all this, virtue not of any condition in the recipient, nor of any ndition at all except that of the due performance of the e.

This view is held with varieties and modifications of any kinds, by an increasingly large number of the embers of the church of England ; but we do not concern urselves with these timid modifications, which painfully tempt to draw some subtle hair's-breadth distinction tween themselves and the above doctrine. The true, onest, and only honest representation of this view is that ut forward undisguisedly by Rome.

When it is objected to the Romanist that there is no idence in the life of the baptized child different from at given by the unbaptized, sufficient to make credible a ange so enormous, he replies, as in the case of the other crament—The miracle is invisible. You cannot see the read and wine become flesh and blood : but the flesh and ood are there, whether you see them or not. You cannot e the effects of regeneration : but they are there, hidden, nether visible to you or not. In other words, Christ has eclared that it is with every one born of the Spirit as with e wind : "*Thou hearest the sound thereof.*" But the omanist distinctly holds that you cannot hear the sound : at the wind hath blown, but there is no sound : that the pirit hath descended, and there are no fruits whereby the ee is known.

In examining this view, at the outset we deprecate those tuperative and ferocious expressions which are used so ommonly against the church of Rome—unbecoming in rivate conversation, disgraceful on the platform, they are ill more unpardonable in the pulpit. I am not advocating at feeble softness of mind which cannot speak strongly ecause it cannot feel strongly. I know the value, and in eir place, the need of strong words. I know that the edeemer used them : stronger and keener never fell from

the lips of man. I am aware that our Reformers us coarse and vehement language: but we do not imbibe t Reformers' spirit by the mere adoption of the Reforme language—nay, paradoxical as it may seem, the use of th language even proves a degeneracy from their spirit. Y will find harsh and gross expressions enough in t Homilies; but remember that when they spoke thus, Ro was in the ascendency; She had the power of fire a sword: and the men who spoke so were candidates martyrdom, by the expressions that they used. Every o might be called upon by fire and steel to prove the qual of what was in him, and account for the high pretension his words. I grant the grossness. But when they spoke the harlotries of Rome, and spoke of her adulteries, a fornications, and lies, which she had put in full cup to t lip of nations, it was the sublime defiance of free-heart men against oppression in high places, and falseho dominant. But now, when Rome is no longer domina and the only persecutions that we hear of are the pe persecutions of Protestants among themselves, to u language such as this is not the spirit of a daring Reform but only the pusillanimous shriek of a cruel cowardice, wh keeps down the enemy whose rising it is afraid of.

We will do justice to this doctrine of Rome. It has t merit at least, that it recognizes the character of a churc it admits it to be a society, and not an association. association is an arbitrary union. Men form associatio for temporary reasons: and, arbitrarily made, they can arbitrarily dissolved. Society, on the contrary, is made by will, but facts. Brotherhood—sonship—families—natio are nature's work: real facts. Rome acknowledges this. permits no arbitrary drawing of the lines of that which c itself the church. A large, broad, mighty field: the Ch tian world: all baptized: nay, expressly, even those w are baptized by heretics. It shares the spirit, instead monopolizing it.

Practically, therefore, in the matter of education, should teach children on the basis on which Rome wo

say as Rome says, You are the child of God: Baptism ares you such. Rome says as Paul says, "As many of as are baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

Consequently, we distinguish between this doctrine as l by spiritual and as held by unspiritual men. Spirit- ty often neutralizes error in views. Men are often better n their creeds. The Calvinist ought to be an Antinomian e is not. So, in holy-minded men, this doctrine of tismal regeneration loses its perniciousness—nay, even omes, in erroneous form, a precious, blessed truth. t is quite another thing, however, held by unspiritual n. Our objections to this doctrine are,

. Because it assumes baptism to be not the testimony fact, but the fact itself. Baptism proclaims the child God. The Romanist says it creates him. Then and re a mysterious change takes place, inward, spiritual, cted by an external rite. This makes baptism not a rament, but an event.

. Because it is materialism of the grossest kind. The er of Christian life is from within to that which is with- —from the spiritual truth to the material expression of The Roman order is from the outward to the creation the inward. This is magic. The Jewish cabalists Ieved that the pronunciation of certain magical words, rraved on the seal of Solomon, would perform marvels. e whole Eastern world fancied that such spells could nsform one being into another—a brute into a man, or nan into a brute. Books containing such trash were nt at Ephesus in the dawn of Christianity. But here, he midday of Christianity, we have belief in such spells, en, it is true that it is said, by God, whereby the de- niacal nature can be exorcised, the Divine implanted in stead, and the evil heart transformed unconsciously into ure spirit.

Now this is degrading God. Observe the results: A d is to be baptized on a given day; but when that day ves, the child is unwell, and the ceremony must be tponed another week or month. Again a delay takes

place—the day is damp or cold. At last the time arrives: the service is read; it may require, if read slowly, five minutes more than ordinarily. Then and there, when that reading is slowly accomplished, the mystery is achieved. And all this time, while the child is ill, while the weather is bad, while the reader procrastinates—I say it solemnly—the Eternal Spirit who rules this universe must wait patiently, and come down, obedient to a mortal's spell, at the very second that it suits his convenience. God must wait attendance on the caprice of a careless parent, ten thousand accidents, nay, the leisure of an indolent or an immoral priest. Will you dare insult the Majesty on high by such a mockery as this result?

3. We object, because this view makes Christian life a struggle for something that is lost, instead of a progress to something that lies before. Let no one fancy that Rome's doctrine on this matter makes salvation an easy thing. The Spirit of God is given—the germ is implanted; but it may be crushed—injured—destroyed. And her doctrine is, that venial sins after baptism are removed by absolutions and attendance on the ordinances: whereas for mortal sins there is—not no hope—but no certainty ever after, until the judgment-day. Vicious men may make light of such teaching, and get periodic peace from absolution, to go and sin again: but to a spiritual Romanist this doctrine is no encouragement for laxity. Now, observe, after sin life becomes the effort to get back to where you were years ago. It is the sad longing glance at the Eden from which you have been expelled, which is guarded now by a fiery sword in this world for ever. And, therefore, whoever is familiar with the writings of some of the earliest leaders of the present movement Romewards, writings that rank among the most touching and beautiful of English compositions, will remember the marked tone of sadness which pervades them, their high sad longings after the baptismal purity that is gone: their mournful contemplations of a soul that once glistened with baptismal dew, now "seamed and scarred" with the indelible marks of sin. The true Christian

life is ever onwards, full of trust and hope: a life wherein even past sin is no bar to saintliness, but the step by which you ascend to higher vantage ground of holiness. The "indelible grace of baptism"—how can it teach that?

The Second view is that held by what we, for the sake of avoiding personalities, call modern Calvinism. It draws a distinction between the visible and the invisible church. It holds that baptism admits all into the former, but into the latter only a special few. Baptismal regeneration, as applied to the first, is merely a change of state—though what is meant by a *change of state* it were hard to say, or to determine wherein an unbaptized person admitted to all the ordinances would differ in *state* from a person baptized. The real benefit of baptism, however, only belongs to the elect. With respect to others, to predicate of them regeneration, in the highest sense, is at best an ecclesiastical fiction, said, "in the judgment of charity."

This view maintains that you are not God's child until you become such consciously. Not until evidence of a regenerate life is given—not until signs of a converted soul are shown, is it right to speak of being God's child, except in this judgment of charity. Now we remark,

1. This judgment of charity ends at the baptismal font. It is never heard of in after-life. It is like the charitable judgment of the English law, which presumes, or is said to presume, a man innocent till proved guilty: valuable enough as a legal fiction; nevertheless, it does not prevent a man barring his windows, guarding his purse, keenly watching against the dealings of those around him who are presumed innocent. Similarly, the so-called judgment of charity terminates with infancy. They who speak of the church's language, in which children are called children of God, as being quite right, but only in the judgment of charity, are exactly the persons who do not in after-life charitably presume that all their neighbours are Christians. "He is not a Christian." "She is one of the world:" or "one of the unregenerate." Such is the language applied to those who are in baptism reckoned children of God. They *could*

not consistently apply to all adults the language applied in this text: "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Ye are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

2. Next, I observe that this view is identical with the Roman one in this respect, that it creates the fact instead of testifying to it. Only, instead of baptism, it substitutes certain views, feelings, and impressions; and asserts that these *make* the man into a child of God. The Romanist says Baptism, the Calvinist says Faith, makes that true which was not true before. It is not a fact that God is that person's Father, till in the one case baptism, in the other, faith, have made him such.

3. Observe the pernicious results of this teaching in the matter of Education. Here again I draw the distinction between the practical consequences which legitimately ought to be, and those which actually are deduced from it. Happily men are better than their views. Hear the man speaking out of his theological system, and then hear him speaking out of the abundance of his heart. Hear the religious mother when the system is in view, and all are indiscriminately, except a certain few, corrupt, vile, with nothing good in them, heirs of ruin. But hear her talk unguardedly of her own children. They have the frailties, weaknesses, common faults, of childhood; but they have no vice in them: there is nothing base or degraded in her children! When the embraces of her child are round her neck, it will require more eloquence than you possess, to convince her that she is nursing a little demon in her lap. The heart of the mother is more than a match for the creed of the Calvinist.

There are some, however, who do not shrink from consistency, and develop their doctrine in all its consequences. The children follow out their instructions with fearful fidelity. Taught that they are not the children of God till certain feelings have been developed in them, they become by degrees bewildered, or else lose their footing on reality. They hear of certain mystic joys and sorrows; and

unless they fictitiously adopt the language they hear, they are painfully conscious that they know nothing of them as yet. They hear of a depression for sin which they certainly have never experienced—a joy in God, making His service and His house the gate of heaven; and they know that it is excessively irksome to them—a confidence, trust, and assurance, of which they know nothing—till they take for granted what has been told them, that they are not God's children. Taught that they are as yet of the world, they live as the world—they carry out their education, which has dealt with them as children of the devil, to be converted: and children of the devil they become.

Of these two views, the last is by far the most certain to undermine Christianity in every Protestant country. The first at least assumes God's badge, an universal one; and in education is so far right, practically: only wrong in the decision of the question how the child was created a child of God. But the second assumes a false, partial, party-badge—election, views, feelings. No wonder that the children of such religionists proverbially turn out ill.

III. We pass to the doctrine of the Bible and (I believe) of the Church.

Christ came to reveal a Name—the Father. He abolished the exclusive "my," and He taught us to pray "our Father." He proclaimed God the Father—man the Son: revealed that the Son of Man is also the Son of God. Man—as man, God's child. He came to redeem the world from that ignorance of the relationship which had left them in heart aliens and unregenerate. Human nature, therefore, became, viewed in Christ, a holy thing and divine. The Revelation is a common humanity, sanctified in God. The appearance of the Son of God is the sanctification of the human race.

The development of this startled men. Sons of God! Yes; ye Jews have monopolized it too long. Is that Samaritan, heretic and alien, a child of God? Yes. The Samaritan: but not these outcasts of society? Yes; these outcasts of society. He went into the publican's house, and

proclaimed that "he, too, was a son of Abraham." He suffered the sinful penitent to flood His feet with tears. He saw there the Eternal Light unquenched—the eye, long dimmed and darkened, which yet still could read the Eternal Mind. She, too, is God's erring, but forgiven, beloved, and "much-loving" child. One step further. He will not dare to say—the Gentiles?—the Gentiles who bow down to stocks and stones? Yes, the Gentiles too. He spake to them a parable. He told of a younger son who had lived long away from his Father's home. But his forgetfulness of his father could not abrogate the fact of his being His son, and as soon as he recognised the relationship, all the blessings of it were his own.

Now this is the Revelation. Man is God's child, and the sin of the man consists in perpetually living as if it were false. It is the sin of the heathen—and what is your mission to him but to tell him that he is God's child, and not living up to his privilege? It is the sin of the baptized Christian waiting for feelings for a claim on God. It was the false life which the Jews had led: precisely this, that they were living coerced by law. Christ had come to redeem them from the law that they might receive the *adoption* of sons. But they were sons already, if they only knew it. "*Because* ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, whereby ye cry Abba, Father." To be a son of God is one thing: to know that you are and call Him Father, is another—and that is regeneration.

Now there was wanted a permanent and authoritative pledge, revealing and confirming this: for, to mankind in the mass, invisible truths become real only when they have been made visible. All spiritual facts must have an existence in form for the human mind to rest on. This pledge is baptism. Baptism is a visible witness to the world of that which the world is for ever forgetting. A common humanity united in God. Baptism authoritatively reveals and pledges to the individual that which is true of the race. Baptism takes the child and addresses it by name:—Paul—no longer Saul—you are a child of God. Remember it henceforth.

It is now revealed to you, and recognised by you, and to recognise God as the Father is to be regenerate (John I. 12). *You*, Paul, are now regenerate—you will have foes to fight—the world, the flesh, and the devil: but remember, they only keep you out of an inheritance which is your own; not an inheritance which you have to win, by some new feeling or merit in yourself. It *is* yours: you *are* the child of God—you *are* a member of Christ—you *are* an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Observe, then, baptism does not *create* a child of God. It authoritatively declares him so. It does not make the fact: it only reveals it. If baptism made it a fact, then and there for the first time, baptism would be magic. Nay, faith does not create a child of God any more than baptism, nor does it make a fact. It only appropriates that which is a fact already. For otherwise see what inextricable confusion you fall into. You ask a man to believe, and thereby be created a child of God. Believe what? That God is his Father. But God is not his Father. He is not a child of God, you say, till he believes. Then you ask him to believe a lie.

Herein lies the error, in basis identical, of the Romanist and the Calvinist. Faith is to one what baptism is to the other, the creator of a fact; whereas they both *rest* upon a fact, which is a fact whether they exist or not—before they exist; nay, without whose previous existence both of them are unmeaning and false.

The Catechism, however, says: In baptism . . . I was *made* a child of God. Yes; coronation makes a sovereign; but, paradoxical as it may seem, it can only *make* a sovereign one who is sovereign already. Crown a pretender, that coronation will not create the king. Coronation is the authoritative act of the nation declaring a fact which was fact before. And ever after, coronation is the event to which all dates back—and the crown is the expression used for all royal acts: the crown pardons, the prerogatives of the crown, &c.

Similarly with baptism. Baptism makes a child of God

in the sense in which coronation makes a king. And baptism naturally stands in Scripture for the title of regeneration and the moment of it. Only what coronation is in an earthly way, an authoritative manifestation of an invisible earthly truth, baptism is in a heavenly way. God's authoritative declaration in material form of a spiritual reality. In other words, no bare sign, but a Divine Sacrament.

Now for the blessings of this view.

1. It prevents exclusiveness and spiritual pride, and all condemnation and contempt of others: for it admits those who have no spiritual capacity or consciousness to be God's children. It proclaims a kingdom, not for a few favourites, but for mankind. It protests against the idea that sonship depends on feelings. It asserts it as a broad, grand, universal, blessed fact. It bids you pray with a meaning of added majesty in the words, *Our* Father. Take care. Do not say of others that they are unregenerate, of the world. Do not make a distinction within the church of Christians and not-Christians. If you do, what do you more than the Pharisees of old? That wretched beggar that holds his hat at the crossing of the street, is God's child as well as you, if he only knew it. You know it—he does not: that is the difference: but the immortal is in him too, and the Eternal Word speaks in him. That daughter of dissipation whom you despise, spending night after night in frivolity, she too, has a Father in heaven. "My Father and *your* Father, my God and *your* God." She has forgotten Him, and, like the prodigal, is trying to live on the husks of the world—the empty husks which will not satisfy—the degrading husks which the swine did eat. But whether she will or not, her baptism is valid, and proclaims a fact—which may be, alas! the worse for her, if she will not have it the better.

2. This doctrine protests against the notion of our being separate units in the Divine life. The church of Calvinism is merely a collection of atoms, a sand-heap piled together with no cohesion among themselves; or a mass of steel-

filings cleaving separately to a magnet, but not to each other. Baptism proclaims a church. Humanity joined in Christ to God. Do not say that the separating work of baptism, drawing a distinction between the church and the world, negatives this. Do not say, that because the church is separated from the world, therefore the world are not God's children. Rather that very separation proves it. You baptize a separate body in order to realize that which is true of the collective race, as in this text, "There is neither Jew nor Greek." In all things it is the same. If you would sanctify all time, you set apart a sabbath—not to show that other days are not intended to be sacred, but for the very purpose of making them sacred. If you would have a "nation of priests," you set apart a priesthood; not as if the priestly functions of instruction and assisting to approach God were exclusively in that body, but in order, by concentration, to bring out to greater perfection the priestly character which is shared by the whole, and then thereby make the whole more truly "priests to God to offer spiritual sacrifices." In the same way, if God would baptize humanity, He baptizes a separate church, in order that that church may baptize the race. The church is God's ideal of humanity realized.

Lastly, This doctrine of baptism sanctifies materialism. The Romanist was feeling his way to a great fact, when he said that there are other things of sacramental efficacy besides these two—baptism and the supper. The things of earth are pledges and sacraments of things in heaven. It is not for nothing that God has selected for His sacraments the commonest of all acts, a meal, and the most abundant of all materials—water. Think you that He means to say that only through two channels His Spirit streams into the soul? Or is it not much more in unison with His dealings to say, that these two are set apart to signify to us the sacramental character of all nature? Just as a miracle was intended not to reveal God working there, at that deathbed and in that storm, but to call attention to his presence in every death and every storm. Go out at

this spring season of the year: see the mighty preparations for life that Nature is making: feel the swelling sense of gratefulness, and the pervasive expanding consciousness of love for all Being; and then say, whether this whole Form which we call Nature is not the great Sacrament of God, the revelation of his Existence, and the channel of his communications to the spirit?

BAPTISM

1 Peter iii. 21.—"The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us."

Last Sunday we considered the subject of baptism in reference to the Romish and modern Calvinistic views. The truth seemed to lie not in a middle course between the two extremes, but in a truth deeper than either of them. For there are various modifications of the Romish view which soften down its repulsive features. There are some who hold that the guilt of original sin is pardoned, but the tendencies of an evil nature remain. Others who attribute a milder meaning to "Regeneration," understanding by it a change of state instead of a change of nature. Others who acknowledge a certain mysterious benefit imparted by baptism, but decline determining how much grace is given, or what the exact nature of the blessing is. Others who acknowledge that it is in certain cases the moment when regeneration takes place, but hold that it is conditional, occurring sometimes, not always, and following upon the condition of what they call prevenient grace. We do not touch upon these views. They are simply modifications of the Romish view; and as such, more offensive than the view itself: for they contain that which

is most objectionable in it, and special evils of their own besides.

We admitted the merits of the two views. We are grateful to the Romanist for the testimony which he bears to the truth of the extent of Christ's salvation: for the privilege which he gives of calling all the baptized children of God,—for the protest which his doctrine makes against all party monopoly of God,—for the protest against ultra-spiritualism, in acknowledging that material things are the types and channels of the Almighty Presence.

We are grateful to the Calvinist for his strong protest against formalism: for his assertion of the necessity of an inward change,—for the distinction which he has drawn between being in the state of sons and having the nature of sons of God.

The error in these two systems, contrary as they are, appeared to us to be identically one and the same,—that of pretending to create a fact instead of witnessing to it. The Calvinist maintains, that on a certain day and hour, under the ministry of the word, under the preaching of some one who "proclaims the gospel," he was born again, and God became his Father; and the Romanist declares, that on a certain day, at a certain moment by an earthly clock, by the hands of a priest apostolically ordained, the evil nature was expelled from him, and a new fact in the world was created: he attained the right of calling God his Father.

Now if baptism makes God our Father, baptism is incantation: if faith makes him so, faith rests upon a falsehood.

For the Romanist does no more than the red Indian and the black negro pretend to do: exorcise the devil, and infuse God. The only question then becomes, Which is the true enchanter, and which is the impostor? for the juggler does, by the power of imagination, often cure the sick man: but the mysterious effects of baptism never are visible, and never can be tested in this world.

On the other hand, Faith would rest upon a falsehood: for if faith is to give the right of calling God a Father, how

can you believe that which is not true the very moment before belief? God is not your Father. If you believe He is, your belief is false.

The truth which underlies these two views, on which all that is true in them rests, and in which all that is false is absorbed, is the Paternity of God. This is the Revelation of the Redeemer. This is authoritatively declared by baptism, appropriated personally by faith: but a truth independent both of baptism and faith; which would still be true if there were neither a baptism nor a faith in the world. They are the witnesses of the fact—not the creators of it.

Here, however, two difficulties arise. If this be so, do we not make light of Original Sin? And do we not reduce baptism into a superfluous ceremony?

Before we enter upon these questions, I must vindicate myself from the appearance of presumption. Where the wisest and holiest have held opposite views, it seems immodest to speak with unfaltering certainty and decisive tone. Hesitation, guarded statements, caution, it would seem, would be far more in place. Now, to speak decidedly is not necessarily to speak presumptuously. There are questions involving great research, and questions relating to truths beyond our ken, where guarded and uncertain tones are only a duty. There are others, where the decision has become conviction, a kind of intuition, the result of years of thought, which has been the day to a man's darkness, "the fountain-light of all his seeing," which has interpreted him to himself, made all clear where all was perplexed before, been the key to the riddle of truths that seemed contradictory, become part of his very being, and for which more than once he has held himself cheerfully prepared to sacrifice all that is commonly held dear. With respect to convictions such as these, of course, the arguments by which they are enforced may be faulty, the illustrations inadequate, the power of making them intelligible very feeble: nay, the views themselves may be wrong: but to pretend to speak with hesitation or uncer-

tainty respecting such convictions, would be not modesty, but affectation.

For let us remember in what spirit we are to enter on this inquiry. Not in the spirit of mere cautious orthodoxy, endeavouring to find a safe mean between two extremes—inquiring what is the view held by the sound, and judicious, and respectable men who were never found guilty of any enthusiasm, and under the shelter of whose opinion we may be secure from the charge of anything unsound. Nor in the spirit of the lawyer, patiently examining documents, weighing evidence, and deciding whether upon sufficient testimony there is such a thing as prevenient grace or not. Nor, once more, in the spirit of superstition. The superstitious mother of the lower classes baptizes her child in all haste because she believes it has a mystic influence on its health, or because she fancies that it confers the name without which it would not be summoned at the day of judgment. And the superstitious mother of the upper classes baptizes *her* child too, in all haste, because, though she does not precisely know what the mystic effect of baptism is, she thinks it best to be on the safer side, lest her child should die, and its eternity should be decided by the omission. And we go to preach to the heathen, while there are men and women in our Christian England so bewildered with systems and sermons, so profoundly in the dark respecting the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, so utterly unable to repose in Eternal Love and Justice, that they must guard their child *from* him by a ceremony, and have the shadow of a shade of doubt whether or not, for omission of theirs, that child's Creator and Father may curse its soul for all eternity!

We are to enter upon this question as a real one of life and death: as men who feel in their bosoms sin and death, and who want to determine no theological nicety, but this: Whether we have a right to claim to be Sons of God or not? And if so, on what grounds? In virtue of a ceremony? or in virtue of a certain set of feelings? Or in virtue of an Eternal Fact—the fact of God's Paternity?

I reply to two objections.

I. The apparent denial of original sin.
II. The apparent result that baptism is nothing.

I. The text selected is a strong and distinct one. It proclaims the value of baptism. "Baptism *saves* us." But it declares that it can only be said figuratively: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us."

Now the first reply I make is, that in truth the Romish view seems to make lighter of original sin than this. Methinks original sin must be a trifling thing if a little water and a few human words can do away with it. A trifling thing if, after it is done away, there is no distinguishable difference between the baptized and unbaptized; if the unbaptized Quaker is just as likely to exhibit the fruits of goodness as the baptized son of the Church of England. We have got out of the land of reality into the domain of figments and speculations. A fictitious guilt is done away with by a fictitious pardon; neither the appearance nor the disappearance being visible.

Original sin is an awful fact. It is not the guilt of an ancestor imputed to an innocent descendant; but it is the tendencies of that ancestor living in his offspring and incurring guilt. Original sin can be forgiven only so far as original sin is removed. It is not Adam's: it is yours: and it must cease to be yours, or else what is "taking away original sin?"

Now he who would deny original sin must contradict all experience in the transmission of qualities. The very hound transmits his peculiarities learnt by education, and the horse of Spain his paces taught by art to his offspring, as a part of their nature. If it were not so in man, there could be no history of man as a species: no tracing out the tendencies of a race or nation: nothing but the unconnected repetitions of isolated individuals, and their lives. It is plain that the first man must have exerted on his race an influence quite peculiar: that his acts must have biassed

their acts. And this bias or tendency is what we call original sin.

Now original sin is just this denial of God's Paternity, refusing to live as His children, and saying we are not His children. To live as His child is the true life: to live as not His child is the false life. What was the Jews' crime? Was it not this: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not:" that they *were* His own, and in act denied it, preferring to the claim of spiritual relationship, the claim of union by circumcision or hereditary descent? What was the crime of the Gentiles? Was it not this: that "when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful?" For what were they to be thankful? For being His enemies? Were they not His children, His sheep of another fold? Was not the whole falsehood of their life the worship of demons and nothings instead of Him? Did not the parable represent them as the younger son, a wanderer from home, but still a son?

From this state Christ redeemed. He revealed God not as the Mechanic of the universe: not the Judge: but as the Father, and as the Spirit who is in man, "lighting every man," moving in man his infinite desires and infinite affections. This was the Revelation. The reception of that revelation is Regeneration. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not; but to as many as *received* Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to as many as believed on His Name." They *were* His own—yet they wanted power to become His own.

Draw a distinction, therefore, between being the child of God and realizing it. The fact is one thing; the feeling of the fact, and the life which results from that feeling, is another. Redemption is the taking of us out of the life of falsehood into the life of truth and fact. "Of His own will begat He us by the word of Truth." But, remember, it is a truth: true whether you believe it or not: true whether you are baptized or not.

There are two ways in which that Revelation may be accepted. 1. By a public recognition called baptism.

2. By faith. In two ways, therefore, may it be said that man is saved. "We are saved by faith." But it is also true, figuratively, "Baptism saves us."

II. If baptism is only the public recognition and symbol of a fact, is not baptism degraded and made superfluous?

1. Baptism is given as a something to rest upon: nay, as a something without which redemption would soon become unreal: which converts a doctrine into a reality: which realizes visibly what is invisible.

For our nature is such, that immaterial truths are unreal to us until they are embodied in material form. Form almost gives them reality and being. For instance, time is an eternal fact. But time only exists to our conceptions as an actuality by measurements of materialism. When God created the sun, and moon, and stars, to serve for "signs and for seasons, and for days and years," He was actually, so far as man was concerned, creating time. Our minds would be only floating in an eternal Now, if it were not for symbolical successions which represent the processes of thought. The clock in the house is almost a fresh creation. It realizes. The gliding heavens, and the seasons, and the ticking clock, what is time to us without them? Nothing.

God's character again, nay, God Himself, *to us* would be nothing if it were not for the creation, which is the great symbol and sacrament of His presence. If there were no light—no sunshine—no sea—no national and domestic life—no material witness of His Being, God would be to us as good as lost. The Creation *gives* us God: for ever real in Himself, by Creation He becomes a Fact to *us*.

It is in virtue, again, of this necessity in man for an outward symbol to realize an invisible Idea, that a bit of torn and blackened rag hanging from a fortress or the tafferel of a ship, is a kind of life to iron-hearted men. Why is it that in the heat of battle there is one spot where the sabres flash most rapidly, and the pistols' ring is quicker, and men and officers close in most densely, and all are gathered round one man, round whose body that tattered silk is wound, and

eld with the tenacity of a death-struggle? Are they only hildren fighting for a bit of rag? That flag is everything o them: their regiment—their country—their honour—heir life: Yet it is *only* a symbol! Are symbols nothing?

In the same way, baptism is a fact for man to rest upon: doctrine realized to flesh and blood. A something in ternity which has no place in time brought down to such ime expressions as "then and there."

2. Again, baptism is the token of a church: the token f a universal church. Observe the importance of its being ne sacrament of a universal church instead of the symbol f a sect. Not episcopacy, not justification by faith, nor ny party-badge; but "one baptism." How blessed, on the trength of this, to be able to say to the baptized dissenter, You are my brother: you anathematize my church—link opery and prelacy together—malign me; but the same sign s on our brow, and the same Father was named over our aptism. Or to say to a baptized Romanist, You are my rother too—in doctrinal error perhaps—in error of life it nay be too: but my brother—our enemies the same—our truggle the same—our hopes and warfare the very same. Or to the very outcast,—And you, my poor degraded friend, re my brother still—sunk, oblivious of your high calling; ut still whatever keeps you away from heaven, keeps you rom your own. You may live the false life till it is too late: ut still, you only exclude yourself from your home. Of ourse this is very offensive. What! the Romanist my rother! the synagogue of Satan the house of God! the pirit of God dwelling with the church of Rome! the eliever in transubstantiation my brother and God's child! Yes, even so; and it is just your forgetfulness of what aptism is and means, that accounts for that indignation of ours. Do you remember what the elder brother in the arable was doing? He went away sulky and gloomy, ecause one, not half so good as himself, was recognised as is Father's child.

3. Baptism is seen to be no mere superfluity when you emember that it is an authoritative symbol. Draw the

distinction between an arbitrary symbol and an authoritative one—for this difference is everything.

I take once again the illustration of the coronation act. Coronation places the crown on the brow of one who *is* sovereign. It does not make the fact; it witnesses it. Is coronation therefore nothing? An arbitrary symbolical act agreed on by a few friends of the sovereign would be nothing: but an act which is the solemn ratification of a country is everything. It realizes a fact scarcely till then felt to be real. Yet the fact was fact before—otherwise the coronation would be invalid. Even when the third William was crowned, there was the symbol of a previous fact—the nation's decree that he should be king: and accordingly, ever after, all is dated back to that. You talk of crown-prerogatives. You say in your loyalty you "would bow to the crown, though it hung upon a bush." Yet it is only a symbol! You only say it "in a figure." But that figure contains within it the royalty of England.

In a figure, the Bible speaks of baptism as you speak of coronation, as identical with that which it proclaims. It calls it regeneration. It says baptism saves. A grand figure—because it rests upon eternal fact. Call you that nothing?

We look to the Bible to corroborate this. In the Acts of the Apostles, Cornelius is baptized. On what grounds? To manufacture him into a child of God? or *because* he was the child of God? Did his baptism create the fact? or was the fact prior to his baptism, and the ground on which his baptism was valid? The history is this: St. Peter could not believe that a Gentile could be a child of God. But miraculous phenomena manifested to his astonishment that this Gentile actually was God's child—whereupon the argument of Peter was very natural. He has the spirit, therefore baptism is superfluous. Nay! he has the spirit, therefore give him the symbol of the spirit. Let it be revealed to others what he is. He *is* heir to the inheritance, therefore give him the title-deeds. He is of royal lineage—put the crown upon his head. He *is* a child of

God—baptize him. "Who shall forbid water, seeing these have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"

One illustration more from the marriage-ceremony; and I select this for two reasons: because it is the type in Scripture of the union between Christ and His Church, and because the church of Rome has called it a sacrament.

A deep truth is in that error. Rome calls it a sacrament, because it is the authoritative symbol of an invisible fact. That invisible fact is the agreement of two human beings to be one. We deny it to be a sacrament, because, though it is the symbol of an invisible fact, it is not the symbol of a spiritual fact—nor an eternal fact; no spiritual truth, but only a changeful human covenant.

Now observe the difference between an arbitrary or conventional, and an authoritative ceremony of marriage-union. There are conventional acknowledgments of that agreement, ceremonies peculiar to certain districts, private pledges, betrothals. In the sight of God those are valid: they cannot be lightly broken without sin. You cannot in the courts of heaven distinguish between an oath to God and a word pledged to man. He said, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay." Such an engagement cannot be infringed without penalty: the penalty of frivolized hearts, and that habit of changefulness of attachment which is the worst of penalties. But now, additional to that, will any one say that the marriage ceremony is superfluous—that the ring he gives his wife is nothing? It is everything. It is the authoritative ratification by a country and before God of that which before was for all purposes of earth unreal. Authoritative—therein lies the difference. Just in that authoritativeness lies the question whether the ceremony is nothing or everything.

And yet remember, the ceremony itself does not pretend to create the fact. It only claims to realize the fact. It admits the fact as existing previously. It bases itself upon a fact. Forasmuch as two persons have consented together—and forasmuch as a token and pledge of that in the shape of a ring has been given, therefore, only therefore, the

appointed minister *pronounces* that they are what betrothal had made them already in the sight of God.

Exactly so, the *authoritativeness* is the all in all which converts baptism from a mere ceremony into a sacrament. Baptism is not merely a conventional arrangement, exceedingly convenient, agreed on by men to remind themselves and one another that they are God's children—but valid as a legal, eternal Truth, a condensed, embodied Fact.

Is this making baptism nothing? I should rather say baptism is everything. Baptism saves us.

One word now practically. I address myself to any one who is conscious of fault, sin-laden, struggling with the terrible question whether he has a right to claim God as his father or not, bewildered on the one side by Romanism—on the other by Calvinism. My brother! let not either of these rob you of your privileges. Let not Rome send you to the fearful questioning as to whether the mystic seed infused at a certain moment by an act of man remains in you still, or whether it has been so impaired by sin that henceforth there is nothing but penance, tears, and uncertainty until the grave. Let not Calvinism send you with terrible self-inspection to the more dreadful task of searching your own soul for the warrant of your redemption, and deciding whether you have or have not the feelings and the faith which give you a right to be one of God's elect. Better make up your mind at once you have not—you have no feelings that entitle you to that. Take your stand upon the broader, sublimer basis of God's Paternity. God created the world—God redeemed the world. Baptism proclaims separately, personally, by name, to you—God created you—God redeemed you. Baptism is your warrant, you are His child. And now, because you are His child, live as a child of God: be redeemed from the life of evil which is false to your nature into the life of Light and Goodness, which is the Truth of your Being. Scorn all that is mean: hate all that is false: struggle with all that is impure. Love whatsoever "things are true, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are lovely,

whatsoever things are of good report;" certain that God is on your side, and that whatever keeps you from Him, keeps you from your own Father. Live the simple, lofty life which befits an heir of immortality.

REGENERATION

JOHN iii. 5–7.—"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.—Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

THE Church of England has, apparently, selected this passage for the Gospel of Trinity Sunday, because the influences of the entire Godhead are named in different verses—the regenerating influence of the Spirit—the limitations of the Son of Man, and the illimitable nature of the Father.

It is a threefold way in which God has revealed Himself to man—as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. First, as a Father in opposition to that doctrine which taught that the whole universe is God, and every part of the universe is a portion of God. He is the Father who hath made this universe—God distinct from us; outside of us; the Creator distinguished from the creation.

Secondly, God has revealed Himself as a Son, as manifested in humanity, chiefly in Christ. Throughout the ages past there has been a mediatorial humanity. Man is in a way the reflection of God's nature—the father to the child. The prophets, the lawgivers, and especially Moses, are called mediators, through whom God's name was known. The mediatorial system culminated in Christ, attained the acme of perfection in one—the man Christ Jesus—the express image of His Father. The Son is the human side of the mind of God.

Thirdly, God has revealed Himself as the Holy Spirit, not as a Father external to us, nor as reflected in humanity still outside us, but as God within us mingling with our being. The body of man is His temple. "In Him we live and move, and have our being."

This is the dispensation of the Spirit: He has told us that every holy aspiration, every thought and act, that has been on the side of right against wrong, is a part of His holy essence, of His spirit in us.

This is the threefold manifestation made of Himself to us by God. But this is not all, for this alone would not be the doctrine of the Trinity. It is quite conceivable that there might be one Living Force manifested in three different ways, without its being a Trinity. Let us try and understand this by an illustration.

Conceive a circular thin plate of metal: above it you would see it such; at some yards distance as an oval; sideways, edgeways, a line. This might be the account of God's different aspects: in one relationship to us seen as the Father, in another as the Son, in another as the Spirit; but this is not the doctrine of the Trinity, it is a heresy, known in old times by the name of Sabellianism or modal Trinity, depending on our position in reference to Him.

Further. This is not merely the same *part* of His nature, seen in different aspects, but diverse parts of His complex being—persons:—three causes of this manifestation. Just as our reason, our memory, our imagination, are not the same, but really ourselves.

Let us take another illustration. A single white ray of light falling on a certain object appears red; on another, blue; on another, yellow. That is, the red alone in one case is thrown out, the blue or yellow in another. So the different parts of the one ray by turns become visible; each is a complete ray, yet the original white ray is but one.

So we believe that in that Unity of Essence there are three living Powers which we call Persons, distinct from each other. It is in virtue of His own incommunicable Essence

that God is the Father. It is the human side of His nature by which He is revealed as the Son, so that it was not, so to speak, a matter of choice whether the Son or the Father should redeem the world. We believe that from all eternity there was that in the mind of God which I have called its human side, which made it possible for Him to be imaged in Humanity; and that again named the Spirit, by which He could mix and mingle Himself with us.

This is the doctrine of the Trinity, explained now, not to point the damnatory clause of the Athanasian creed, but only in order to seize joyfully the annual opportunity of professing a firm belief in the dogmatic truth of the Trinity.

We now pass on to notice more particularly the revelation to us of one mode in which that Blessed Trinity works. This will divide itself into two subjects. First, we shall endeavour to understand what is meant by the kingdom of God; and, secondly, we shall consider the entrance into that kingdom by regeneration.

Our blessed Lord says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now that expression—the kingdom of God—is a Jewish one. Nicodemus was a Jew; and we must, therefore, endeavour to comprehend how he would understand it.

By the kingdom of God, a Jew understood human society perfected. That domain on earth where God was visible and God ruled. The whole Jewish dispensation had trained Nicodemus to realize this. The Jewish kingdom was a theocracy, distinguished from an aristocracy and a democracy. There were two main things observable in this. First, it was a kingdom in which God's power was manifestly visible by miracles, marvels, the cloud and fire pillars, and by appearances direct from the King of Kings. The second matter of importance in this conception of the divine kingdom was that it was a society in which a Person ruled. God was the ruler of this society; her laws all dated from God's will, and were right because the will of the Ruler was right. "Thus saith the Lord," was the preface to personal messages from their King.

Bear in mind then, that this was Nicodemus's conception of the kingdom, and we shall understand the conversation. He had seen in the works of Christ the assertion of a Living Will ruling over the laws of nature. He had seen wonders and signs. Therefore he said, "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God:" he saw that Christ in these two senses fulfilled the two requisites of a Divine mission. He had seen a society growing up in acknowledgment of the rule of a Person: but Christ told him that something more was needful than this: it was necessary that the subject should be prepared for the kingdom. It was not enough that God should draw nigh to man; but that man must draw near to God. There must be an alteration in the man. "Except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

In other words, he distinguished between a kingdom that is visible and a kingdom that is invisible. He distinguished between that presence of God which man can see, and that which man can only feel. This will explain apparent contradictions in Christ's language.

To the Pharisee on one occasion, He said, "If I by the finger of God, cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come unto you." But again He said, "It is not lo here, nor lo there. For the kingdom of God is within you." There is a kingdom therefore, in which the Eternal Spirit moves, whereof the senses take cognizance. Nicodemus saw that kingdom when he gazed on the miracles and outward signs, and felt that they were evidences, and from these and from the gathering society around the Lord, drew the conclusion that no man could do these things except God were with him.

There was the outward manifestation. But there is another kingdom which is the peculiar domain of the Spirit, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive," into which flesh and blood cannot enter. Of this kingdom Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it." And of this St. Paul said, "Now this I

say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

Unless an inward change takes place, though surrounded by God's kingdom, we cannot enter into it. The eye, the ear, can take no cognizance of this; it must be revealed by the Spirit to the spirit.

Pass we on, secondly, to consider the entrance into this kingdom by regeneration. As there is a twofold kingdom, so is there a twofold entrance.

1. By the baptism of water. 2. By the baptism of the Spirit. Now respecting the first of these, commentators have been greatly at variance. A large number of Protestant commentators have endeavoured to explain this passage away, as if it did not apply to baptism at all. But by all the laws of correct interpretation, we are compelled to admit that "born of water" has here a reference to baptism.

Into God's universe or kingdom we penetrate by a double nature—by our senses and by our spirit. To this double nature God has made a twofold revelation. God's witness to our senses is baptism; God's witness to our spirit is His Spirit. "He that believeth hath the witness in himself." Now let us observe the strength of that expression of Christ's, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." A very strong expression, but not more so than the baptismal service of the Church of England. "Born of water" is equivalent to regeneration by baptism.

There are those who object to this formulary of our Church, because it seems to them to tell of a magical or miraculous power in the hands of the priest. In answer to them, we point to this passage of the inspired Word of God: let us try and understand in what sense it is true that a man is born of water. Now we hold baptism to be the sign, or proof, or evidence, of a spiritual fact. It is not the fact, but it substantiates the fact.

The spiritual fact is God's covenant. Let us take an illustration. The right of a man to his property is in right of his ancestor's will; it is in virtue of that will or intention,

that the man inherits that property. But because that will is invisible, it is necessary that it should be made manifest in visible symbols; and therefore there is a piece of parchment by which it is made tangible, and that, though only the manifestation of the will, is called "the will" itself. Nay, so strongly is this word with its associations rooted in our language, that it may never have occurred to us that it is but a figurative expression; and the law might, if it had been so chosen, have demanded another expression of the will.

There have been cases in which a high-minded heir-at-law has accepted the verbal testimony of another to the intentions of his ancestor, where there has been no outward manifestation whatever, and so has given away the property because the inward will of his ancestor was to him all in all.

Similarly, baptism is the revealed Will of God; that is, it is the instrument that declares God's Will. God's Will is a thing invisible; verbally, the will runs thus—"Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

And just as the instrument which declares a will is called by a figure of speech "the will" itself, although it is but the manifestation of it, so the ecclesiastical instrument which declares regeneration is called regeneration in the Bible and in our Church Service. Baptism is "regeneration" as a parchment is a "will;" and, therefore it is that we read in this passage, "born of water;" and, therefore it is that St. Peter says, "Baptism saves us;" and St. Paul says, "Buried with Christ in baptism."

Lastly, we pass on to consider the entrance into this kingdom by a spiritual change.

The ground on which Christ states it is our human nature. We have a twofold nature—the nature of the animal and the nature of God, and in the order of God's providence we begin with the animal. Howbeit says St. Paul, "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural." Now the moment when these natures are exchanged is the moment of spiritual regeneration.

A man is to be born of water, but far rather of the Spirit. Of this expression there are several interpretations: first, the fanatical one—men of enthusiastic temperaments, chiefly men whose lives have been irregular, whose religion has come to them suddenly, interpreting all cases by their own experiences, have said that the exercise of God's spirit is ever sudden and supernatural, and it has seemed to them that to try and bring up a child for God in the way of education, is to bid defiance to that Spirit which is like the wind, blowing "where it listeth;" and if a man cannot tell the day or hour when he was converted, to those persons he does not seem to be a Christian at all. He may be holy, humble, loving, but unless there is that visible manifestation of how and when he was changed, he must be still ranked as unregenerate.

Another class of persons, of cold, calm temperament, to whom fanaticism is a crime and enthusiasm a thing to be avoided, are perpetually rationalizing with Scripture, and explaining away in some low and commonplace way the highest manifestation of the spirit of God. Thus Paley tells us that this passage belongs to the Jews, who had forgotten the Messiah's kingdom; but to speak of a spiritual, regenerative change, as necessary for a man brought up in the Church of England, is to open the door to all fanaticism.

There is a third class, who confound the regeneration of baptism with that of the Spirit, who identify in point of time, the being born of water and of the Spirit. And it seems to them that regeneration after that, is a word without meaning. Of this class there are two divisions: those who hold it openly in the Church of Rome, and those who do not go to the full extent of Romish doctrine on this subject. These will not say that a miracle has taken place, but they say that a seed of grace has thus been planted. Whichever of these views be taken, for all practical purposes the result must be the same. If this inward spiritual change has taken place at baptism, then to talk of regeneration *after* that must be an impertinence. But, brethren, looking at this passage,

we cannot be persuaded that it belongs to the Jew alone, nor can we believe that the strength of that expression is mere baptism by water. Here is recorded that which is true not for the Jew or heathen only, but for all the human race, without exception. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

In our life there is a time in which our spirit has gained the mastery over the flesh; it is not important to know when, but whether it has taken place.

The first years of our existence are simply animal; then the life of a young man is not that of mere instinct, it is a life of passion, with mighty indignations, strong aversions. And then passing on through life we sometimes see a person in whom these things are merged; the instincts are there only for the support of existence; the passions are so ruled that they have become gentleness, and meekness, and love. Between these two extremes there must have been a middle point, when the life of sense, appetite, and passion, which *had* ruled, ceased to rule, and was ruled over by the life of the spirit: that moment, whether it be long or short, whether it be done suddenly or gradually, whether it come like the rushing mighty wind, or as the slow, gentle zephyr of the spring—whenever that moment was, then was the moment of spiritual regeneration. There are cases in which this never takes place at all; there are grown men and old men merely children still—still having the animal appetites, and living in the base, and conscious, and vicious indulgence of those appetites which in the child were harmless. These are they who have not been born again. Born of water they may have been, born of God's eternal Spirit they have not been; before such men can enter into the eternal kingdom of their Father, that word is as true to them as to Nicodemus of old, "Marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again." Oh! it is an awful thing to see a spectacle such as that; an awful thing to see the blossom still upon the tree when the autumn is passed and the winter is at hand. An awful thing to see a man who ought to be clothed in Christ, still living the life of the flesh and

of passion: the summer is past, the harvest is ended, and he is not saved.

Now let us briefly apply what has been said.

1. Do not attempt to date too accurately the transition moment.

2. Understand that the "flesh," or natural state, is wrong only when out of place. In its place it is imperfection, not evil. There is no harm in leaves or blossoms in spring, but in autumn! There is no harm in the appetites of childhood, or the passions of youth, but great harm when these are still unsubdued in age. Observe therefore, the flesh is not to be exercised, but the spirit strengthened. This I say then, "Walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

3. Do not mistake the figurative for the literal.

Baptism is regeneration figuratively; "the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter iii. 21).

The things to be anxious about are not baptism, not confirmation; but the spiritual facts for which baptism and confirmation stand.

CHRIST THE SON

HEBREWS i. 1.—"God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

Two critical remarks.

1. "Sundry times"—more literally, sundry portions—sections, not of time, but of the matter of the revelation. God gave His revelation in parts, piecemeal, as you teach a child to spell a word—letter by letter, syllable by syllable

—adding all at last together. God had a Word to spell—His own Name. By degrees He did it. At last it came entire. The Word was made Flesh.

2. "His Son," more correctly, "a Son"—for this is the very argument. Not that God now spoke by Christ, but that whereas once He spoke by prophets, now by a Son. The Filial dispensation was the last.

This epistle was addressed to Christians on the verge of apostacy. See those passages: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame." "Cast not away our confidence." "We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end."

Observe what the danger was. Christianity had disappointed them—they had not found in it the rest they anticipated. They looked back to the Judaism they had left, and saw a splendid temple-service—a line of priests—a visible temple witnessing of God's presence—a religion which was unquestionably fertile in prophets and martyrs. They saw these pretensions and wavered.

But this was all on the eve of dissolution. The Jewish earth and heavens, *i. e.* the Jewish Commonwealth and Church, were doomed and about to pass away. The writer of this epistle felt that their hour was come[1]—and if their religion rested on nothing better than this, he knew that in the crash religion itself would go. To return to Judaism was to go down to atheism and despair.

Reason alleged—they had contented themselves with a superficial view of Christianity: they had not seen how it was interwoven with all their own history, and how it alone explained that history.

[1] See chap. xii. 26, 27.

Therefore in this epistle the writer labours to show that Christianity was the fulfilment of the *Idea* latent in Judaism: that from the earliest times, and in every institution, it was implied. In the monarchy—in prophets—in sabbath days—in psalms—in the priesthood, and in temple-services, Christianity lay concealed: and the dispensation of a Son was the realization of what else was shadow. He therefore alone who adhered to Christ was the true Jew, and to apostatize from Christianity was really to apostatize from true Judaism.

I am to show, then, that the manifestation of God through a Son was implied, not realized, in the earlier dispensation.

"Sundry portions" of this Truth are instanced in the epistle. The mediatorial dispensation of Moses—the gift of Canaan—the Sabbath, &c. At present I select these:

I. The preparatory Dispensation.
II. The filial and final Dispensation.

I. Implied, not fulfilled in the kingly office. Three Psalms are quoted, all referring to kingship. In Psalm 2d it was plain that the true idea of a king was only fulfilled in one who was a Son of God. The Jewish king was king only so far as he held from God: as His image, the representative of the Fountain of Law and Majesty.

"To Him God hath said, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee."

The 45th Psalm is a bridal hymn, composed on the marriage of a Jewish king. Startling language is addressed to him. He is called God—Lord. "Thy throne, *O God*, is for ever and ever." The bride is invited to worship him as it were a God: "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him." No one is surprised at this who remembers that Moses was said to be made a God to Aaron. Yet it is startling, almost blasphemous, unless there be a deeper meaning implied: the divine character of the real king.

In the 110th Psalm a new idea is added. The true

king must be a priest. "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek." This was addressed to the Jewish king; but it implied that the ideal king, of which he was for the time the representative, more or less truly, is one who at the same time sustains the highest religious character, and the highest executive authority.

Again, David was emphatically the type of the Jewish regal idea. David is scarcely a personage, so entirely does he pass in Jewish forms of thought into an ideal Sovereign—"the sure mercies of David." David is the name therefore for the David which was to be. Now David was a wanderer, kingly still, ruling men and gaining adherents by force of inward royalty. Thus in the Jewish mind the kingly office disengaged itself from outward pomp and hereditary right as mere accidents, and became a personal reality. The king was an idea.

Further still. The epistle extends this idea to man. The psalm had ascribed (Ps. viii. 6) kingly qualities and rule to manhood—rule over the creation. Thus the idea of a king belonged properly to humanity; to the Jewish king as the representative of humanity.

Yet even in collective humanity the royal character is not realized. "We see not," says the epistle, "all things as yet put under him"—man.

Collect then, these notions. The true king of men is a Son of God: one who is to his fellow-men, God and Lord, as the Jewish bride was to feel her royal husband to be to her: one who is a priest: one who may be poor and exiled, yet not less royal.

Say, then, whence is this idea fulfilled by Judaism? To which of the Jewish kings can it be applied, except with infinite exaggeration? To David? Why, the Redeemer shows the insuperable difficulty of this. "How then doth David in Spirit call him,"—*i.e.* the king of whom he was writing, "Lord, saying, the Lord said unto my *Lord*, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy footstool?"

David writing of himself, yet speaks there in the third

person, projecting himself outward as an object of contemplation, an idea.

Is it fulfilled in the human race? "We see not yet all things put under him." Then the writer goes on—"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." In Jesus of Nazareth alone all these fragments, these sundry portions of the revealed Idea of Royalty met.

II. Christianity was implied in the race of prophets.

The second class of quotations refer to the prophets' life and history. (Heb. ii. 11–14.) Psalm xxii. 22; Psalm xviii. 2; Isaiah xii. 2; Isaiah viii. 18.

Remember what the prophets were. They were not merely predictors of the future. Nothing destroys the true conception of the prophets' office more than those popular books in which their mission is certified by curious coincidences. For example, if it is predicted that Babylon shall be a desolation, the haunt of wild beasts, &c., then some traveller has seen a lion standing on Birs Nimroud: or if the fisherman is to dry his nets on Tyre, simply expressing its destruction thereby, the commentator is not easy till he finds that a net has been actually seen drying on a rock. But this is to degrade the prophetic office to a level with Egyptian palmistry: to make the prophet like an astrologer, or a gipsy fortune-teller—one who can predict destinies and draw horoscopes. But in truth, the first office of the prophet was with the present. He read eternal principles beneath the present and the transitory, and in doing this of course he prophesied the future; for a principle true to-day is true for ever. But this was, so to speak, an accident of his office: not its essential feature. If for instance, he read in the voluptuousness of Babylon the secret of Babylon's decay, he also read by anticipation the doom of Corinth, London, of all cities in Babylon's state; or if Jerusalem's fall was predicted, in it all such judgment comings were foreseen; and the language is true of the fall of the world:

as truly, or more so, than that of Jerusalem. A philosopher saying in the present tense the law by which comets move, predicts all possible cometary movements.

Now the prophet's life almost more than his words was predictive. The writer of this epistle lays down a great principle respecting the prophet (ii. 11): "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." It was the very condition of his inspiration that he should be one with the people. So far from making him superhuman, it made him more man. He felt with more exquisite sensitiveness all that belongs to man, else he could not have been a prophet. His insight into things was the result of that very weakness, sensitiveness, and susceptibility so tremblingly alive. He burned with their thoughts, and expressed them. He was obliged by the very sensitiveness of his humanity to have a more entire dependence and a more perfect sympathy than other men. The sanctifying prophet was one with those whom he sanctified. Hence he uses those expressions quoted from Isaiah and the Psalms above.

He was more man, just because more divine—more a son of man, because more a son of God. He was peculiarly the suffering Israelite: His countenance marred more than the sons of men. Hence we are told the prophets searched "what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter i. 11).

Observe, it was a spirit *in* them, their own lives witnessing mysteriously of what the Perfect Humanity must be suffering.

Thus especially Isa. liii was spoken originally of the Jewish nation: of the prophet as peculiarly the Israelite: and it is no wonder the eunuch asked Philip in perplexity, "Of whom doth the prophet say this? of himself or some other man?" The truth is, he said it of himself, but prophetically of humanity: true of him, most true of the Highest Humanity.

Here then was a new "portion" of the revelation. The prophet rebuked the king: often opposed the priest, but

was one with the people. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one."

If then, One had come claiming to be the Prophet of the Race, and was a Sufferer, claiming to be the Son of God, and yet peculiarly man; the son of man: the son of man just because the Son of God: more Divine because more human: then this was only what the whole race of Jewish prophets should have prepared them for. God had spoken by the prophets. That God had now spoken by a Son in whom the idea of the true prophet was realized in its entireness.

III. The Priesthood continued this idea latent. The writer of this epistle saw three elements in the priestly idea. 1. That he should be ordained for men in things pertaining to God. 2. That he should offer gifts and sacrifices. 3. That he should be called by God, not be a mere self-assertor.

1. Ordained for men. Remark here the true idea contained in Judaism, and its difference from the Heathen notions. In Heathenism the priest was of a different Race: separate from his fellows. In Judaism he was ordained for men; their representative: constituted in their behalf. The Jewish priest represented the holiness of the nation; he went into the holy of holies, showing it. But this great idea was only implied, not fulfilled in the Jewish priest. He was only by a fiction the representative of holiness. Holy he was not. He only entered into a fictitious holy of holies. If the idea were to be ever real, it must be in One who should be actually what the Jewish priest was by a figment, and who should carry our humanity into the real Holy of Holies—the presence of God; thus becoming our invisible and Eternal Priest.

Next, it was implied that his call must be Divine. But in the 110th Psalm a higher call is intimated than that Divine call which was made to the Aaronic priesthood by a regular succession, or as it is called in the epistle, "the law of a carnal commandment." Melchizedek's call is spoken

of. The king is called a priest after his order. Not a derived or hereditary priesthood: not one transmissible, beginning and ending in himself—Heb. vii. 1 to 3. A priesthood, in other words, of character, of inward right: a call internal, hence more Divine: or, as the writer calls it, a priest "after the power of an endless life." This was the Idea for which the Jewish psalms themselves ought to have prepared the Jew.

Again the priests offered gifts and sacrifices. Distinguish. Gifts were thank-offerings: first-fruits of harvest, vintage, &c., a man's best: testimonies of infinite gratefulness, and expressions of it. But sacrifices were different: they implied a sense of unworthiness: that sense which conflicts with the idea of any right to offer gifts.

Now the Jewish Scriptures themselves had explained this subject, and this instinctive feeling of unworthiness for which sacrifice found an expression. Prophets and psalmists had felt that no sacrifice was perfect which did not reach the conscience (Ps. li. 16, 17), for instance; also Heb. x. 8 to 12. No language could more clearly show that the spiritual Jew discerned that entire surrender to the Divine Will is the only perfect Sacrifice, the ground of all sacrifices, and that which alone imparts to it a significance. Not sacrifice . . . "Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." *That* is the sacrifice which God wills.

I say it firmly—all other notions of sacrifice are false. Whatsoever introduces the conception of vindictiveness or retaliation; whatever speaks of appeasing fury; whatever estimates the value of the Saviour's sacrifice by the "penalty paid;" whatever differs from these notions of sacrifice contained in psalms and prophets,—is borrowed from the bloody shambles of Heathenism, and not from Jewish altars.

This alone makes the worshipper perfect as pertaining to the conscience. He who can offer it in its entireness, He alone is the world's Atonement; He in whose heart the Law was, and who alone of all mankind was content to do it,

His Sacrifice alone can be the Sacrifice all-sufficient in the Father's sight as the proper Sacrifice of humanity: He who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, He alone can give the Spirit which enables us to present *our* bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

He is the only High Priest of the Universe.

CHRIST'S ESTIMATE OF SIN

LUKE xix. 10.—"The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

THESE words occur in the history which tells of the recovery of Zaccheus from a life of worldliness to the life of God. Zaccheus was a publican; and the publicans were outcasts among the Jews, because, having accepted the office under the Roman government of collecting the taxes imposed by Rome upon their brethren, they were regarded as traitors to the cause of Israel. Reckoned a degraded class, they became degraded. It is hard for any man to live above the moral standard acknowledged by his own class; and the moral standard of the publican was as low as possible. The first step downwards is to sink in the estimation of others—the next and fatal step is to sink in a man's own estimation. The value of character is that it pledges men to be what they are taken for. It is a fearful thing to have no character to support—nothing to fall back upon—nothing to keep a man up to himself. Now the publicans had no character.

Into the house of one of these outcasts the Son of Man had entered. It was quite certain that such an act would be commented upon severely by people who called themselves religious: it would seem to them scandalous, an outrage

upon decency, a defiance to every rule of respectability and decorum. No pious Israelite would be seen holding equal intercourse with a publican. In anticipation of such remarks, before there was time perhaps to make them, Jesus spoke these words: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

They exhibit the peculiar aspect in which the Redeemer contemplated sin.

There are two ways of looking at sin:—One is the severe view: it makes no allowance for frailty—it will not hear of temptation, nor distinguish between circumstances. Men who judge in this way shut their eyes to all but two objects—a plain law, and a transgression of that law. There is no more to be said: let the law take its course. Now if this be the right view of sin, there is abundance of room left for admiring what is good, and honourable, and upright: there is positively no room provided for restoration. Happy if you have done well; but if ill, then nothing is before you but judgment and fiery indignation.

The other view is one of laxity and false liberalism. When such men speak, prepare yourself to hear liberal judgments and lenient ones: a great deal about human weakness, error in judgment, mistakes, an unfortunate constitution, on which the chief blame of sin is to rest—a good heart. All well, if we wanted in this mysterious struggle of a life only consolation. But we want far beyond comfort—Goodness; and to be merely made easy when we have done wrong will not help us to *that!*

Distinct from both of these was Christ's view of guilt. His standard of Right was high—higher than ever man had placed it before. Not moral excellence, but heavenly, He demanded. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Read the Sermon on the Mount. It tells of a purity as of snow resting on an Alpine pinnacle, white in the blue holiness of heaven; and yet, also, He the All-pure had tenderness for what was not pure. He who stood in Divine uprightness that never

faltered, felt compassion for the ruined, and infinite gentleness for human fall. Broken, disappointed, doubting hearts, in dismay and bewilderment, never looked in vain to Him. Very strange, if we stop to think of it, instead of repeating it as a matter of course. For generally human goodness repels from it evil men: they shun the society and presence of men reputed good, as owls fly from light. But here was purity *attracting* evil; that was the wonder. Harlots and wretches steeped in infamy gathered round Him. No wonder the purblind Pharisees thought there must be something in Him like such sinners which drew them so. Like draws to like. If He chose their society before that of the Pharisees, was it not because of some congeniality in Evil? But they *did* crowd His steps, and that because they saw a hope opened out in a hopeless world for fallen spirits and broken hearts, ay, and seared hearts. The Son of Man was for ever standing among the lost, and His ever predominant feelings were sadness for the evil in human nature, hope for the Divine good in it, and the Divine image never worn out wholly.

I perceive in this description three peculiarities, distinguishing Christ from ordinary men.

I. A peculiarity in the constitution of the Redeemer's moral nature.
II. A peculiarity in the objects of His solicitude.
III. A peculiarity in His way of treating guilt.

I. In His moral constitution. Manifested in that peculiar title which he assumed—the Son of Man.

Let us see what that implies.

1. It implies fairly His Divine origin: for it is an emphatic expression, and, as we may so say, an unnatural one. Imagine an apostle, St. Paul or St. John, insisting upon it perpetually that he himself was human. It would almost provoke a smile to hear either of them averring and affirming, I am a Son of Man: it would be unnatural, the affectation of condescension would be intolerable. Therefore, when we hear these words from Christ, we are compelled

to think of them as contrasted with a higher Nature. None could without presumption remind men that He was their Brother and a Son of Man, except One who was also something higher, even the Son of God.

2. It implies the catholicity of His Brotherhood.

Nothing in the judgment of historians stands out so sharply distinct as race—national character: nothing is more ineffaceable. The Hebrew was marked from all mankind. The Roman was perfectly distinct from the Grecian character; as markedly different as the rough English truthfulness is from Celtic brilliancy of talent. Now these peculiar nationalities are seldom combined. You rarely find the stern, old Jewish sense of holiness going together with the Athenian sensitiveness of what is beautiful. Not often do you find together severe truth and refined tenderness. Brilliancy seems opposed to perseverance. Exquisiteness of taste commonly goes along with a certain amount of untruthfulness. By Humanity, as a whole, we mean the aggregate of all these separate excellences. Only in two places are they all found together—in the universal human race; and in Jesus Christ. He having, as it were, a whole Humanity in Himself, combines them all.

Now this is the universality of the Nature of Jesus Christ. There was in Him no national peculiarity or individual idiosyncrasy. He was not the Son of the Jew, nor the Son of the carpenter; nor the offspring of the modes of living and thinking of that particular century. He was the Son of Man. Once in the world's history was born a MAN. Once in the roll of ages, out of innumerable failures, from the stock of human nature, one Bud developed itself into a faultless Flower. One perfect specimen of humanity has God exhibited on earth.

The best and most catholic of Englishmen has his prejudices. All the world over our greatest writer would be recognised as having the English cast of thought. The pattern Jew would seem Jewish everywhere but in Judea. Take Abraham, St. John, St. Paul, place them where you will, in China or in Peru, they are Hebrews: they could not

command all sympathies: their life could nor be imitable except in part. They are foreigners in every land, and out of place in every country but their own. But Christ is the King of men, and "draws all men," because all character is in Him, separate from nationalities and limitations. As if the life-blood of every nation were in His veins, and that which is best and truest in every man, and that which is tenderest, and gentlest, and purest in every woman, in His character. He is emphatically the Son of *Man.*

Out of this arose two powers of His sacred humanity—the universality of His sympathies, and their intense particular personality.

The universality of His sympathies: for, compare Him with any one of the sacred characters of Scripture. You know how intensely national they were in their sympathies, priests, prophets, and apostles: *e. g.* the apostles "marvelled that He spake with a woman of Samaria:"—just before His resurrection, their largest charity had not reached beyond this, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom unto *Israel?*" Or, to come down to modern times, when His spirit has been moulding men's ways of thought for many ages:—now, when we talk of our philanthropy and catholic liberality, here in Christian England, we have scarcely any fellow-feeling, true and genuine, with other nations, other churches, other parties, than our own: we care nothing for Italian or Hungarian struggles; we think of Romanists as the Jew thought of Gentiles; we speak of German Protestants in the same proud, wicked, self-sufficient way in which the Jew spoke of Samaritans.

Unless we bring such matters home, and away from vague generalities, and consider what we and all men are, or rather are not, we cannot comprehend with due wonder the mighty sympathies of the heart of Christ. None of the miserable antipathies that fence us from all the world, bounded the outgoings of that Love, broad and deep and wide as the heart of God. Wherever the mysterious pulse of human life was beating, wherever aught human was in struggle, there to Him, was a thing not common or unclean, but

cleansed by God and sacred. Compare the daily, almost indispensable language of our life with His spirit. "Common people?"—Point us out the passage where He called any people that God His Father made, common? "Lower orders?"—Tell us when and where He, whose home was the workshop of the carpenter, authorized you or me to know any man after the flesh as low or high? To Him who called Himself the Son of Man, the link was manhood. And that He could discern even when it was marred. Even in outcasts His eye could recognise the sanctities of a nature human still. Even in the harlot "one of Eve's family:"—a "son of Abraham" even in Zaccheus.

Once more, out of that universal, catholic Nature rose another power—the power of intense, particular, personal affections. He was the Brother and Saviour of the human race; but this because He was the Brother and Saviour of every separate man in it.

Now it is very easy to feel great affection for a country as a whole; to have, for instance, great sympathies for Poland, or Ireland, or America, and yet not care a whit for any single man in Poland, and to have strong antipathies to every single individual American. Easy to be a warm lover of England, and yet not love one living Englishman. Easy to set a great value on a flock of sheep, and yet have no particular care for any one sheep or lamb. If it were killed, another of the same species might replace it. Easy to have fine, large, liberal views about the working-classes, or the emancipation of the negroes, and yet never have done a loving act to one. Easy to be a great philanthropist, and yet have no strong friendships, no deep personal attachments.

For the idea of an universal Manlike sympathy was not new when Christ was born. The reality *was* new. But before this, in the Roman theatre, deafening applause was called forth by this sentence—"I am a man—nothing that can affect man is indifferent to me." A fine sentiment—that was all. Every pretence of realizing that sentiment, except one, has been a failure. One and but one has succeeded

in loving man: and that by loving men. No sublime high-sounding language in His lips about educating the masses, or elevating the people. The charlatanry of our modern sentiment had not appeared then: it is but the parody of His love.

What was His mode of sympathy with men? He did not sit down to philosophize about the progress of the species, or dream about a millennium. He gathered round Him twelve men. He formed one friendship, special, concentrated, deep. He did not give Himself out as the Leader of the Publican's cause, or the Champion of the Rights of the dangerous classes; but He associated with Himself Matthew, a publican called from the detested receipt of custom. He went into the house of Zaccheus, and treated him like a fellow-creature—a brother and a son of Abraham. His catholicity or philanthropy was not an abstraction, but an aggregate of personal attachments.

II. Peculiarity in the objects of Christ's solicitude.

He had come to seek and to save *the* "*lost.*" The world is lost, and Christ came to save the world. But by the lost in this place He does not mean the world; He means a special class, lost in a more than common sense, as sheep are lost which have strayed from the flock, and wandered far beyond all their fellows scattered in the wilderness.

Some men are lost by the force of their own passions, as Balaam was by love of gold: as Saul was by self-will, ending in jealousy, and pride darkened into madness: as Haman was by envy indulged and brooded on: as the harlots were, through feelings pure and high at first, inverted and perverted: as Judas was by secret dishonesty, undetected in its first beginnings, the worst misfortune that can befall a tendency to a false life. And others are lost by the entanglement of outward circumstances, which make escape, humanly speaking, impossible. Such were the publicans: men *forced*, like executioners, into degradation. An honest publican, or a holy executioner, would be miracles to marvel at. And some are lost by the laws of society, which while

defending society, have no mercy for its outcasts, and forbid their return, fallen once for ever.

Society has power to bind on earth ; and what it binds is bound upon the soul indeed.

For a man or woman who has lost self-respect is lost indeed.

And oh! the untold world of agony contained in that expression—"a lost soul!" agony exactly in proportion to the nobleness of original powers. For it is a strange and mournful truth, that the qualities which enable men to shine are exactly those which minister to the worst ruin. God's highest gifts—talent, beauty, feeling, imagination, power : they carry with them the possibility of the highest heaven and the lowest hell. Be sure that it is by that which is highest in you that you may be lost. It is the awful warning, and not the excuse of evil, that the light which leads astray is light from heaven. The shallow fishing-boat glides safely over the reefs where the noble bark strands : it is the very might and majesty of her career that bury the sharp rock deeper in her bosom. There are thousands who are not lost (like the respectable Pharisees), because they had no impetuous impulses—no passion—no strong enthusiasm, by the perversion of which they could be lost.

Now this will explain to us what there was in these lost ones which left a hope for their salvation, and which Jesus saw in them to seek and save. Outwardly men saw a crust of black scowling impenitence. Reprobates they called them. Below that outward crust ran a hot lava-stream of anguish : What was that? The coward fear of hell? Nay, hardened men defy hell. The anguish of the lost ones of this world is not fear of punishment. It was, and is, the misery of having quenched a light brighter than the sun : the intolerable sense of being sunk : the remorse of knowing that they were not what they might have been. And He saw that : He knew that it was the germ of life which God's spirit could develop into salvation.

It was His work and His desire to save such, and in this world a new and strange solicitude it was, for the world had seen before nothing like it.

Not half a century ago a great man was seen stooping and working in a charnel-house of bones. Uncouth, nameless fragments lay around him, which the workmen had dug up and thrown aside as rubbish. They belonged to some far-back age, and no man knew what they were or whence. Few men cared. The world was merry at the sight of a philosopher groping among mouldy bones. But when that creative mind, reverently discerning the fontal types of living being in diverse shapes, brought together those strange fragments, bone to bone, and rib to claw, and tooth to its own corresponding vertebra, recombining the wondrous forms of past ages, and presenting each to the astonished world as it moved and lived a hundred thousand ages back, then men began to perceive that a new science had begun on earth.

And such was the work of Christ. They saw Him at work among the fragments and mouldering wreck of our Humanity, and sneered. But He took the dry bones such as Ezekiel saw in Vision, which no man thought could live, and He breathed into them the breath of life. He took the scattered fragments of our ruined nature, interpreted their meaning, showed the original intent of those powers, which were now destructive only, drew out from publicans and sinners yearnings which were incomprehensible, and feelings which were misunderstood, vindicated the beauty of the original intention, showed the Divine Order below the chaos, exhibited to the world once more a human soul in the form in which God had made it, saying to the dry bones "Live!"

Only what in the great foreigner was a taste, in Christ was Love. In the one the gratification of an enlightened curiosity: in the other the gratification of a sublime affection. In the philosopher it was a longing to restore and reproduce the past. In Christ a hope for the future—"to seek and to save that which was lost."

III. A peculiarity in His mode of treatment. How were these lost ones to be restored? The human plans are

reducible to three. Governments have tried chastisement for the reclamation of offenders. For ages that was the only expedient known either to Church or State. Time has written upon it Failure. I do not say that penal severity is not needful. Perhaps it is, for protection, and for the salutary expression of indignation against certain forms of evil. But as a system of reclamation it has failed. Did the rack ever reclaim in heart one heretic? Did the scaffold ever soften one felon? One universal fact of history replies: Where the penal code was most sanguinary, and when punishments were most numerous, crime was most abundant.

Again, society has tried exclusion for life. I do not pretend to say that it may not be needful. It *may* be necessary to protect your social purity by banishing offenders of a certain sort for ever. I only say for recovery it is a failure. Whoever knew one case where the ban of exclusion was hopeless, and the shame of that exclusion reformed? Did we ever hear of a fallen creature made moral by despair? Name if you can, the publican or the harlot in any age brought back to goodness by a Pharisee, or by the system of a Pharisee.

And once more, some governors have tried the system of indiscriminate lenity: they forgave great criminals, trusting all the future to gratitude: they passed over great sins, they sent away the ringleaders of rebellion with honours heaped upon them: they thought this was the Gospel: they expected dramatic emotion to work wonders. How far this miserable system has succeeded, let those tell us who have studied the history of our South African colonies for the last twenty years. We were tired of cruelty—we tried sentiment—we trusted to feeling. Feeling failed: we only made hypocrites, and encouraged rebellion by impunity. Inexorable severity —rigorous banishment—indiscriminate and mere forgivingness,—all are failures.

In Christ's treatment of guilt we find three peculiarities: —Sympathy, holiness, firmness.

1. By human sympathy. In the treatment of Zaccheus

this was almost all. We read of almost nothing else as the instrument of that wonderful reclamation. One thing only, Christ went to his house self-invited. But that one was everything. Consider it—Zaccheus was, if he were like other publicans, a hard and hardened man. He felt people shrink from him in the streets. He lay under an imputation: and we know how that feeling of being universally suspected and misinterpreted makes a man bitter, sarcastic, and defiant. And so the outcast would go home, look at his gold, rejoice in the revenge he could take by false accusations, felt a pride in knowing that they might hate, but could not help fearing him: scorned the world, and shut up his heart against it.

At last, one whom all men thronged to see, and all men honoured, or seemed to honour, came to him, offered to go home and sup with him. For the first time for many years, Zaccheus felt that he was not despised, and the floodgates of that avaricious, shut heart were opened in a tide of love and generosity. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

He was reclaimed to human feeling by being taught that he was a man still; recognised and treated like a man. A Son of Man had come to "seek" him, the lost.

2. By the exhibition of Divine holiness.

The holiness of Christ differed from all earthly, common, vulgar holiness. Wherever it was, it elicited a sense of sinfulness and imperfection. Just as the purest cut crystal of the rock looks dim beside the diamond, so the best men felt a sense of guilt growing distinct upon their souls. When the Anointed of God came near, "Depart from me," said the bravest and truest of them all, "for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

But at the same time the holiness of Christ did not awe men away from Him, nor repel them. It inspired them with hope. It was not that vulgar unapproachable sanctity which makes men awkward in its presence, and stands aloof.

Its peculiar characteristic was that it made men enamoured of goodness. It "drew all men unto Him."

This is the difference between greatness that is first-rate and greatness which is second-rate—between heavenly and earthly goodness. The second-rate and the earthly draws admiration on itself. You say, "How great an act—how good a man!" The first-rate and the heavenly imparts itself—inspires a spirit. You feel a kindred something in you that rises up to meet it, and draws you out of yourself, making you better than you were before, and opening out the infinite possibilities of your life and soul.

And such pre-eminently was the holiness of Christ. Had some earthly great or good one come to Zaccheus' house, a prince or a nobleman, his feeling would have been, What condescension is there! But when *He* came whose every word and act had in it Life and Power, no such barren reflection was the result: but instead, the beauty of holiness had become a power within him, and a longing for self-consecration. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

By Divine sympathy, and by the Divine Image exhibited in the speaking act of Christ, the lost was sought and saved. He was saved, as alone all fallen men can be saved. "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, he was changed into the same image." And this is the very essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are redeemed by the Life of God without us, manifested in the Person of Christ, kindling into flame the Life of God that is within us. Without Him we can do nothing. Without Him the warmth that was in Zaccheus' heart would have smouldered uselessly away. Through Him it became Life and Light, and the lost was saved.

THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

1 JOHN iii 4, 5.—"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.—And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin."

THE heresy with which the Apostle St. John had to contend in his day was an error of a kind and character which it is hard for us, with our practical, matter-of-fact modes of thinking, to comprehend. There were men so over-refined and fastidious, that they could not endure the thought of anything spiritual being connected with materialism. They could not believe in anything being pure that was also fleshly, for flesh and sinfulness were to them synonymous terms. They could not believe in the Divine Humanity, for humanity was to them the very opposite of that which was Divine: and accordingly, while admitting the Divinity of Jesus, they denied the reality of His materialism. They said of His earthly life exactly what the Roman Catholic says of the miracle he claims to be performed in the Supper of the Lord. The Roman Catholic maintains that it is simply an illusion of the senses; there is the taste of the bread, the look of the bread, the smell of the bread, but it is all a deception: there is no bread really there, it is only the spiritual body of the Lord. That which the Romanist says now of the elements in the Lord's Supper, did these ancient heretics say respecting the Body and the Life of Jesus. There was, they said, the sound of the human voice, there was the passing from place to place, there were deeds done, there were sufferings undergone, but these were all an illusion and a phantasma—a thing that appeared, but did not really exist. The Everlasting Word of God was making Itself known to the minds of men through the senses by an illusion; for to say that the Word of God was made flesh, to

maintain that He connected Himself with sinful, frail humanity—this was degradation to the Word—this was destruction to the purity of the Divine Essence.

You will observe that in all this there was an attempt to be eminently spiritual; and what seems exceedingly marvellous, is the fact withal that these men led a life of extreme licentiousness. Yet it is not marvellous, if we think accurately, for we find even now that over-refinement is but coarseness. And so, just in the same way, these ultra-spiritualists, though they would not believe that the Divine Essence could be mingled with human nature without degradation, yet they had no intention of elevating human nature by their own conduct. They thought they showed great respect for Jesus in all this; they denied the reality of His sufferings: they would not admit the conception that frail, undignified humanity was veritably His, but nevertheless they had no intention of living more spiritually themselves. It was therefore that we find in another epistle, St. John gives strict commands to his converts not to admit these heretics into their houses: and the reason that he gives is, that by so doing they would be partakers, not of their evil doctrines, but of their evil deeds. They were a licentious set of men, and it is necessary to keep this in view if we would understand the writings of St. John. It is for this reason, therefore, that he says,—"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life, declare we unto you." It is for this reason that he, above all the Apostles, narrates with scrupulous accuracy all the particulars respecting the Redeemer's risen body—that he joined in the repast of the broiled fish and the honey-comb: and that he dwells with such minuteness on the fact that there came from the body of the Redeemer blood and water: "not water only, but water and blood;" and it is for this reason that in speaking of Antichrist he says, "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God, and this is that Spirit of Antichrist whereof

ye have heard that it should come." So then we learn from this that the most spiritual of all the apostles was the one who insisted most earnestly on the materialism of the Human Nature of our Lord. He who alone had penetrated into that Realm beyond, where the King was seen on His throne of Light, was the one who felt most strongly that in Humanity there was nothing degrading. In the natural propensities of human nature there is nothing to be ashamed of: there is nothing for a man to be ashamed of but Sin—there is nothing more noble than a perfect human nature.

My brethren, though the error of the ancient times cannot be repeated in this age in the same form, though this strange belief commends itself not to our minds, yet there may be such an exclusive dwelling upon the Divinity of Jesus as absolutely to destroy His real Humanity; there may be such a morbid sensitiveness when we speak of Him as taking our nature, as will destroy the fact of His sufferings—yes, and destroy the reality of His Atonement also. There is a way of speaking of the sinlessness of Jesus that would absolutely make that scene on Calvary a mere pageant in which He was acting a part in a drama, during which He was not really suffering, and did not really crush the propensities of His human nature. It was for this reason we lately dwelt on the Redeemer's sufferings; now let us pass onward to the fact of the sinlessness of His nature.

The subject divides itself—first, into the sinlessness of His nature; and secondly, the power which He possessed from that sinlessness to take away the sins of the world.

With respect to the first branch, we have given us a definition of what sin is—"Sin is the transgression of the law." It is to be observed there is a difference between sin and transgression. Every sin is a transgression of the law, but every transgression of the law is not necessarily a sin. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law. Now mark the difference. It is possible for a man to

transgress the law of God, not knowingly, and then in inspired language we are told that "sin is not imputed unto him." Yet, for all that, the penalty will follow whenever a man transgresses, but the chastisement which belongs to sin, to known wilful transgression, will not follow.

Let us take a case in the Old Testament, which it may be as well to explain, because sometimes there is a difficulty felt in it. We read of the patriarchs and saints in the Old Testament as living in polygamy. There was no distinct law forbidding it, but there was a law written in the "fleshy tables of the heart," against which it is impossible to transgress without incurring a penalty. Accordingly, though we never find that the patriarchs are blamed for the moral fault, though you never find them spoken of as having broken the written law of God, yet you see they reaped the penalty that ever must be reaped—in the case of one, degradation; in the case of the other, slavery. Jacob's many wives brought dissension and misery into his household, though he did it innocently and ignorantly, and he reaped the penalty—quarrels and wretchedness. In all this there is penalty, but there is not sin in all this, and therefore there was not excited that agony which comes from the pangs of conscience after wilful sin. Every misery that falls on man has been the consequence of transgression, his own trespass or those of others. It may have been his parents, his grand-parents, or his far-back ancestors, who have given him the disadvantages under which he labours. How shall we explain the fact that misery falls alike on the good and on the evil? Only by remembering whether it comes as the penalty of transgression ignorantly done: then it is but the gentle discipline of a Father's love, educating His child, it may be warning the child and giving him the knowledge of that Law of which he was hitherto ignorant. This wretchedness of the patriarchs, what was it but the corrective dispensation by which the world learnt that polygamy is against the Law of God? So the child who cuts his hand with the sharp blade of the knife has learnt a lesson concerning his need of caution for

the future, and if well and bravely borne, he is the better for it; but if there has been added to that transgression the sin of disobedience to his parent's command, then there is something inflicted beyond the penalty; there is all that anguish of conscience and remorse which comes as the consequence of sin. Now we have seen what transgression is, let us try to understand what sin is.

My Christian brethren, it is possible for us to mistake this subject by taking figurative expressions too literally. We speak of sin as if it were a thing, as if we were endowed with it, like memory, or judgment, or imagination, as a faculty which must be exercised. Now let us learn the truth of what sin is—it "is the transgression of the Law." There must be some voluntary act, transgressing some known law, or there is no sin. There were those in the days of St. John who held that sin was merely the infirmity of the flesh; that if a man committed sin and he was to know that it was the working merely of his lower nature, not of his own mind —his faith would save him. Another error was that of the Pharisees in the days of Jesus; and their error was precisely opposite. "Yes," said the Pharisees, "sin is the transgression of the law. Holiness is conformity to the law, and the lives of the Pharisees being conformable to the ceremonial law, we stand before the world as, touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." The Redeemer comes, and He gives another exposition of sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law," but there is a law written for the heart, as well as for the outward man. There is a work to be done within as well as without. A murder may be committed, by indulging revenge and malice, though the hand has never been lifted to strike. It is not the outward act that constitutes alone the Morality of Christ, it is the feeling of the heart, the acts of the inner man.

But then, there is another error from which we have to guard ourselves. It is a sophistry in which some men indulge themselves. They say, "Well, if the thought is as bad as the act, why should we not therefore do the act? I

am as guilty as if I had committed transgression; why should I debar myself from the enjoyment?" It is, I say, but sophistry, for no man that has any conscience can really so deceive himself. The Redeemer's doctrine was that many a man whose outward life was pure and spotless would have done the transgression if he had had the opportunity. It is one thing to say that he would have done it if he could, but it is quite another thing to say that a man who has indulged the thought, and has drawn back, is as guilty as if he had actually carried out the evil act. The difference lies in this—the one would have done it if he could, and the other could and would not. We read in the Bible of two men who exemplify this. They both resolved to commit murder, and the opportunity was given to each. Saul threw his javelin with right good will at David's person; he did all that resolution could do, it was but what is called accident that left the javelin quivering in the wall. Opportunity was given also to David. He had resolved to slay Saul, but when the tempting opportunity came, when he was bending over Saul, full of the thought of destroying his enemy, at the very last moment he paused—his conscience smote him—he refused to strike. Which of these was the murderer? Saul was the murderer, he had slain in his heart. It was but an accident that prevented it. In the other case there had been the indulgence of a wrong thought, but it was subdued. He might say, he might as well have slain his foe, but would you say that he was in the same position as a murderer? No, Christian brethren, let there be no sophistry of this kind among us. It is but a subtle whisper from our great adversary that would beguile us. Generally there is first a rising of an inclination which is often no sin. This passes on to a guilty resolve—one step more, and the man has committed the sin.

Now let us turn to the character of our blessed Redeemer, and we shall find Him doubly free from all this—as free in desire as free in act. The proof of His perfect purity is to be found in the testimony of His enemies, of His friends,

and of those indifferent to Him. We have first the evidence of His enemies. For three long years the Pharisees were watching their victim. There was the Pharisee mingling in every crowd, hiding behind every tree. They examined His disciples; they cross-questioned all around Him; they looked into His ministerial life, into His domestic privacy, into His hours of retirement. They came forward with the sole accusation that they could muster—that He had shown disrespect to the Roman governor. The Roman judge, who at least should know, had pronounced the accusation null and void. There was another spy. It was Judas. If there had been one act of sin, one failing in all the Redeemer's career that betrayed ambition, that betrayed any desire to aggrandize Himself,—in his hour of terrible remorse Judas would have remembered it for his own comfort; but the bitterness of his feelings—that which made life insufferable—was that he had "betrayed innocent blood."

Pass we on to those who were indifferent. And first we have the opinion of Pilate himself. Contemporary historians tell us that Pilate was an austere and cruel man, a man of firm resolve, and one who shrank not from the destruction of human life; but we see here that for once the cruel man became merciful: for once the man of resolve became timid. It was not merely that he thought Jesus was innocent; the hard Roman mind would have cared little for the sacrifice of an obscure Jew. The soul of Pilate was pervaded with the feeling that spotless innocence stood before him, and this feeling extended even to Pilate's wife; for we find that she sent to him and said, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man." It was not because he was going to pass an unjust sentence—he had often done so before—but she felt that here was an innocent one who must not be condemned.

Now let us consider the testimony of His friends. They tell us that during their intercourse of three years His was a life unsullied by a single spot: and I pray you to remember that tells us something of the holiness of the thirty previous years; for no man springs from sin into perfect righteousness at once. If there has been any early wrong-doing—though

a man may be changed—yet there is something left that tells of his early character—a want of refinement, of delicacy, of purity; a tarnish has passed upon the brightness, and cannot be rubbed off. If we turn to the testimony of John the Baptist, His contemporary, about the same age, one who knew Him not at first as the Messiah: yet when the Son of Man comes to him simply as a man, and asks him to baptize Him, John turns away in astonishment, shocked at the idea. "I have need to be baptized of thee: and comest thou to Me?" In other words, the purest, and the most austere man that could be found on earth was compelled to acknowledge that in Him who came for baptism there was neither stain nor spot that the water of Jordan was needed to wash away. So we see there was no actual transgression in our blessed Lord.

Now let us see what the inward life was; for it is very possible that there may be no outward transgression, and yet that the heart may not be pure. It is possible that outwardly all may seem right, through absence of temptation, and yet there may be the want of inward perfection. Of the perfection of Jesus we can have but one testimony; it cannot be that of the apostles, for the lesser cannot judge the greater, and therefore we turn to Himself. He said, "Which of you can charge Me with sin?" "I and My Father are one." Now we must remember that just in proportion as a man becomes more holy, does he feel and acknowledge the evil that is in him. Thus it was with the Apostle Paul; he declared, "I am the chief of sinners." But here is one who attained the highest point of human excellence, who was acknowledged even by His enemies to be blameless, who declares Himself to be sinless. If, then, the Son of Man were not the promised Redeemer—He, the humblest of mankind, might justly be accused of pride; the purest of mankind would be deemed to be unconscious of the evil that was in Him. He who looked so deeply into the hearts of others is ignorant of His own; the truest of mankind is guilty of the worst of falsehoods; the noblest of mankind guilty of the sin of sins—the belief

that He had no sin. Let but the infidel grant us that human nature has never attained to what it attained in the character of Jesus, then we carry him still farther, that even He whom he acknowledges to be the purest of men declared Himself to be spotless, which, if it were false, would at once do away with all the purity which he grants was His. It was not only the outward acts, but the inner life of Jesus which was so pure. His mind regulates every other mind; it moves in perfect harmony with the mind of God. In all the just men that ever lived, you will find some peculiarity carried into excess. We note this in the zeal of St John, in the courage of St. Peter, in the truth-seeking of St. Thomas. It was not so with Jesus: no one department of His human nature ever superseded another: all was harmony there. The one sound which has come down from God in perfect melody, is His Life, the entire unbroken music of Humanity.

We pass on to our second subject—the power there is in the manifested sinlessness of Jesus to take away the sins of the world. There are two aspects in which we are to consider this: first in reference to man, and secondly in reference to God. Our subject to-day will confine itself to the first; on the other, we simply say this: there is in the eternal constitution of the heavenly government, that which makes the life and death of Jesus the atonement for the world's sins. Human nature which fell in Adam, rose again in Christ; in Him it became a different thing altogether in God's sight—redeemed now, hereafter to be perfected.

But we leave this for the present, and consider how the world was purified by the change of its own nature. "If I be lifted up I will draw all men unto Me." There are three ways by which this may be done—by Faith, by Hope, and by Love. It is done by Faith, for the most degrading thing in the heart of man is the disbelief in the goodness of human nature. We live in evil, and surrounded by evil, until we have almost ceased to believe in greatness of mind or character. The more a man increases in knowledge of the world, the more does he suspect human nature; a knowing man, according to worldly phraseology, is one that will

trust no one. He knows that he himself has his price, and he believes that he can buy any one else: and this may be called the second fall of man—that moment when all our boyish belief in goodness passes away; when such degradation and anguish of soul comes on, that we cease to believe in woman's purity or in man's integrity: when a man has fallen so low there is nothing in this world that can raise him, except faith in the perfect innocence of Jesus. Then it is that there bursts upon the world—that of which the world never dreamed—entire and perfect purity, spotless integrity—no mere dreaming of philosophers and sages—though the dream were a blessed thing to have; the tangible living Being before us, whom we can see, and touch, and hear, so that a man is able to come to his brother with trust in elevated Humanity, and to say, "This is He of whom the Prophets did write."

But secondly, trust in Divine Humanity elevates the soul. It is done by Hope. You must have observed the hopefulness of the character of Jesus—His hopefulness for human nature. If ever there were one who might have despaired, it was He. Full of love Himself, He was met with every sort of unkindness, every kind of derision. There was treachery in one of His disciples, dissension amongst them all. He was engaged in the hardest work that man ever tried. He was met by the hatred of the whole world, by torture and the cross; and yet never did the hope of Human Nature forsake the Redeemer's soul. He would not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. There was a spark mingling even in the lowest Humanity, which He would fain have fanned into a blaze. The lowest publican Jesus could call to Him, and touch his heart; the lowest profligate that was ever trodden under foot by the world, was one for whom He could hope still. If He met with penitents, He would welcome them; if they were not penitents, but yet felt the pangs of detected guilt, still with hopefulness He pointed to forgiven Humanity: this was His word, even to the woman brought to Him by her accusers, "Go, and sin no more;" in His last moments on the cross, to one who was dying by

His side, He promised a place in Paradise: and the last words that broke from the Redeemer's lips, what were they but hope for our Humanity, while the curses were ringing in His ears?—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Now, it is this hopefulness that raises hope in us. Christian brethren, we dare to hope for that nature which Jesus loved, we dare to forgive that nature which Jesus condescended to wear. This frail, evil, weak Humanity of ours, these hearts that yield to almost every gust of temptation, the Son of Man hoped for them. And it is done by Love; hate narrows the heart, love expands the heart. To hate is to be miserable; to love is to be happy. To love, is to have almost the power of throwing aside sin. See the power of love in the hearts of those around Him. He comes to a desponding man, nourishing dark thoughts of the world; He speaks encouragingly, and the language of that man is, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest." He goes to a man who had loved money all his life. He treats him as a Man, and the man's heart is conquered: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor." He comes to the coward, who had denied Him, and asks him simply, "Lovest thou Me?" and the coward becomes a martyr, and dares to ask to be crucified. He comes to a sinful woman, who had spent large sums on the adornment of her person, and the ointment which was intended for herself was poured in love upon His feet, mingling with her tears. "She loved much," and much was forgiven.

And it was not during the Redeemer's life alone, that the power of His love extended. It was manifested also after His death. There was the healing act done on the man who asked for alms. For this the apostles were carried before the Sadducees, and the man on whom this miracle was done stood by them, full of strength and courage. The day before he had been a miserable, cringing suppliant, beseeching pity from the passers-by. But all the wailing tone is gone; the attitude of the suppliant has passed away,

and the renovated cripple fronts the supreme judicature of Israel with a lion heart. Ask you what has inspired and dignified that man, and raised him higher in the scale of Humanity? It was the power of love. It is not so much the manifestation of this doctrine or that doctrine, that can separate the soul from sin. It is not the Law. It is not by pressing on the lower nature to restrain it, that this can be done, but it is by elevating it. He speaks not to the degraded of the sinfulness of sin, but He dwells upon the Love of the Father, upon His tender mercies; and if a man would separate himself from the bondage of guilt, there is no other way than this. My Christian brethren, forget that miserable past life of yours, and look up to the streams of mercy ever flowing from the right hand of God.

My brethren, it is on this principle that we desire to preach to the heathen. We would preach neither High Church nor Low Church doctrine. We desire to give Jesus Christ to the world; and in pleading for this [missionary] society I will not endeavour to excite your sympathies by drawing a picture of the heathen world suspended over unutterable misery, and dropping minute by minute into everlasting wretchedness. It is easy to do this; and then to go away calmly and quietly to our comfortable meals, and our handsome habitations, satisfied with having demonstrated so tremendous a fact. But this we say, if we would separate the world from sin, and from the penalty of sin, and the inward misery of the heart attendant on sin in this world, and the world to come, it is written in Scripture, "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," than the name of Jesus.

THE SANCTIFICATION OF CHRIST

JOHN xvii. 19.—"And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

THE prayer in which these words occur is given to us by the Apostle John alone. Perhaps only St. John *could* give it, for it belongs to the peculiar province of his revelation. He presents us with more of the heart of Christ than the other apostles: with less of the outward manifestations. He gives us more conversations—fewer miracles: more of the inner life—more of what Christ was, less of what Christ did.

St. John's mind was not argumentative, but intuitive. There are two ways of reaching truth: by reasoning it out and by feeling it out. All the profoundest truths are felt out. The deep glances into truth are got by Love. Love a man, that is the best way of understanding him. Feel a truth, that is the only way of comprehending it.

Not that you can put your sense of such truths into words in the shape of accurate maxims or doctrines, but the truth is reached, notwithstanding. Compare 1 Cor. ii. 15, 16.

Now St. John *felt out* truth. He understood his Lord by loving him. You find no long trains of argument in St. John's writings: an atmosphere of contemplation pervades all. Brief, full sentences, glowing with imagery of which the mere prose intellect makes nonsense, and which a warm heart alone interprets, that is the character of his writing: very different from the other apostles. St. Peter's knowledge of Christ was formed by impetuous mistakes, corrected slowly and severely. St. Paul's Christianity was formed by principles wrought out glowing hot, as a smith hammers out ductile iron, in his unresting, earnest fire of thought, where the Spirit dwelt in warmth and light for ever, kindling the Divine fire of inspiration. St. John and St. John's Christianity were formed by personal view of Christ, intercourse with Him, and by silent contemplation. Slowly, month by

month and year by year, he gazed on Christ in silence, and thoughtful adoration: "Reflecting as from a glass the glory of the Lord," he became like Him—caught His tones—His modes of thought—His very expressions, and became partaker of his inward life. A "Christ was formed in him."

Hence it was that this prayer was revealed to St. John alone of the apostles, and by him alone recorded for us. The Saviour's mind touched his: through secret sympathy he was inspired with the mystic consciousness of what had passed and what was passing in the deeps of the soul of Christ. Its secret longings and its deepest struggles were known to John alone.

This particular sentence in the prayer which I have taken for the text was peculiarly after the heart of the Apostle John. For I have said that to him the true life of Christ was rather the inner Life than the outward acts of life. Now this sentence from the lips of Jesus speaks of the Atoning Sacrifice as an inward mental act rather than as an outward deed: a self-consecration wrought out in the Will of Christ. For their sakes I am sanctifying myself. That is a resolve—a secret of the inner Life. No wonder that it was recorded by St. John.

The text has two parts.

I. The sanctification of Jesus Christ.
II. The sanctification of His people.

I. Christ's sanctification of Himself. "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

We must explain this word "sanctify;" upon it the whole meaning turns. Clearly it has not the ordinary popular sense here of making holy. Christ *was* holy. He could not by an inward effort or struggle *make* Himself holy, for He was that already.

Let us trace the history of the word "sanctify" in the early pages of the Jewish history.

When the destroying angel smote the first-born of the Egyptian families, the symbolic blood on the lintel of every

Hebrew house protected the eldest born from the plague of death. In consequence, a law of Moses viewed every eldest son in a peculiar light. He was reckoned as a thing devoted to the Lord—redeemed, and therefore set apart. The word used to express this devotion is *sanctify*. "The Lord said unto Moses, *sanctify* unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine."

By a subsequent arrangement these first-born were exchanged for the Levites. Instead of the eldest son in each family, a whole tribe was taken, and reckoned as set apart and devoted to Jehovah, just as now a substitute is provided to serve in war in another's stead. Therefore the tribe of Levi were said to be *sanctified* to God.

Ask we what was meant by saying that the Levites were sanctified to God? The ceremony of their sanctification will explain it to us. It was a very significant one. The priest touched with the typical blood of a sacrificed animal the Levite's right hand, right eye, right foot. This was the Levite's sanctification. It devoted every faculty and every power—of seeing, doing, walking, the right hand faculties—the best and choicest—to God's peculiar service. He was a man set apart.

To sanctify, therefore, in the Hebrew phrase, meant to devote or consecrate. Let us pause for a few moments to gather up the import of this ceremony of the Levites.

The first-born are a nation's hope; they may be said to represent a whole nation. The consecration therefore of the first-born was the consecration of the entire nation by their representatives. Now the Levites were substituted for the first-born. The Levites consequently represented all Israel; and by their consecration the life of Israel was declared to be in idea and by right a consecrated life to God. But further still. As the Levites represented Israel, so Israel itself was but a part taken for the whole, and represented the whole human race. If any one thinks this fanciful, let him remember the principle of representation on which the whole Jewish system was built. For example

—the first-fruits of the harvest were consecrated to God. Why?—to declare that portion and that only to be God's? No; St. Paul says as a part for the whole, to teach and remind that the whole harvest was His. "If the first-fruits be holy, the lump also is holy." So, in the same way, God consecrated a peculiar people to Himself? Why? The Jews say because they alone are His. We say, as a part representative of the whole, to show in one nation what all are meant to be. The holiness of Israel is a representative holiness. Just as the consecrated Levite stood for what Israel was meant to be, so the anointed and separated nation represents for ever what the whole race of man is in the Divine Idea, a thing whose proper life is perpetual consecration.

One step further. This being the true Life of Humanity, name it how you will, sanctification, consecration, devotion, sacrifice, Christ the Representative of the Race, submits Himself in the text to the universal law of this devotion. The true law of every life is consecration to God: therefore Christ says, I consecrate Myself: else He had not been a Man in God's idea of manhood—for the idea of Man which God had been for ages labouring to give through a consecrated tribe and a consecrated nation to the world, was the idea of a being whose life-law is sacrifice, every act and every thought being devoted to God.

Accordingly, this is the view which Christ Himself gave of His own Divine Humanity. He spoke of it as of a thing devoted by a Divine decree. "Say ye of Him, whom the Father hath *sanctified*, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

We have reached therefore the meaning of this word in the text, "For their sakes I sanctify, *i. e.* consecrate or devote myself." The first meaning of sanctify is to set apart. But to set apart for God is to devote or consecrate; and to consecrate a thing is to make it holy. And thus we have the three meanings of the word, viz. to set apart, to devote, to make holy—rising all out of one simple idea.

To go somewhat into particulars. This sanctification is

spoken of here chiefly as threefold: Self-devotion by inward resolve—self-devotion to the Truth—self-devotion for the sake of others.

1. He devoted Himself *by inward resolve.* "I sanctify myself." God His Father had devoted Him before. He had sanctified and sent Him. It only remained that this devotion should become by His own act—*self*-devotion: completed by His own will. Now in that act of will consisted His sanctification of Himself.

For observe, this was done within: in secret, solitary struggle—in wrestling with all temptations which deterred Him from His work—in resolve to do it unflinchingly: in real human battle and victory.

Therefore this self-sanctification applies to the whole tone and history of His mind. He was for ever devoting Himself to work—for ever bracing His human spirit to sublime resolve. But it applies peculiarly to certain special moments, when some crisis, as on this present occasion, came which called for an act of will.

The first of these moments which we read of came when He was twelve years of age. We pondered on it a few weeks ago. In the temple, that earnest conversation with the doctors indicates to us that He had begun to revolve His own mission in His mind; for the answer to His mother's expostulations shows us what had been the subject of those questions He had been putting: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Solemn words, significant of a crisis in His mental history. He had been asking those doctors about His Father's business: what it was, and how it was to be done by Him of whom He had read in the prophets, even Himself. This was the earliest self-devotion of Messias: the Boy was sanctifying Himself for life and manhood's work.

The next time was in that preparation of the wilderness which we call Christ's Temptation. You cannot look deeply into that strange story without perceiving that the true meaning of it lies in this, that the Saviour in that conflict was steeling His soul against the three-fold form in which

temptation presented itself to Him in after-life, to mar or neutralize His ministry.

1. To convert the hard, stony life of Duty into the comfort and enjoyment of this life: to barter, like Esau, life for pottage: to use Divine powers in Him only to procure bread of Earth.

2. To distrust God, and try impatiently some wild, sudden plan, instead of His meek and slow-appointed ways —to cast Himself from the temple, as we dash ourselves against our destiny.

3. To do homage to the majesty of wrong: to worship Evil for the sake of success: to make the world His own by force or by crooked policy, instead of by suffering.

These were the temptations of His life as they are of ours. If you search through His history, you find that all trial was reducible to one or other of these three forms. In the wilderness His soul foresaw them all; they were all in spirit met then, fought and conquered before they came in their reality. In the wilderness He had sanctified and consecrated Himself against all possible temptation, and Life thenceforward was only the meeting of that in Fact which had been in Resolve met already—a vanquished foe.

I said He had sanctified Himself against every trial: I should have said, against every one except the last. The temptation had not exhibited the terrors and the form of Death: He had yet to nerve and steel Himself to that. And hence the lofty sadness which characterizes His later ministry, as he went down from the sunny mountain-tops of life into the darkening shades of the valley where lies the grave. There is a perceptible difference between the tone of His earlier and that of His later ministry which by its evidently undesigned truthfulness gives us a strong feeling of the reality of the history.

At first all is bright, full of hope, signalized by success and triumph. You hear from Him joyous words of anticipated victory: "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." And we recollect how His first sermon in the

synagogue of Capernaum was hailed; how all eyes were fixed on Him, and His words seemed full of grace.

Slowly after this, there comes a change over the spirit of His life. The unremitting toil becomes more superhuman, "I must work the work of Him that sent Me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work." The cold presentiment of doom hangs more often on Him. He begins to talk to His disciples in mysterious hints of the betrayal and the cross. He is going down into the cloud-land, full of shadows where nothing is distinct, and His step becomes more solemn, and His language more deeply sad. Words of awe, the words as of a soul struggling to pierce through thick glooms of Mystery, and Doubt, and Death, come more often from His lips: *e.g.* "Now is My soul troubled: and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I into the world." "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And here in the text is another of those sentences of mournful grandeur: "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

Observe the present tense. Not I *shall* devote Myself —but I sanctify, *i.e.* I am sanctifying Myself. It was a mental struggle going on then. This prayer was, so to speak, part of His Gethsemane prayer—the first utterances of it,—broken by interruption—then finished in the garden. The consecration and the Agony had begun—the long inward battle—which was not complete till the words came, too solemnly to be called triumphantly, though they were indeed the trumpet-tones of Man's grand victory, "It is finished."

2. The sanctification of Christ was self-devotion to the Truth.

I infer this, because He says, "I sanctify Myself, that they *also* might be sanctified through the truth." "Also" implies that what His consecration was, theirs was. Now theirs is expressly said to be sanctification by the Truth. That then was His consecration too. It was the Truth which devoted Him and marked Him out for death.

For it was not merely death that made Christ's sacrifice the world's Atonement. There is no special virtue in mere death, even though it be the death of God's own Son. Blood does not please God. "As I live, said the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner." Do you think God has pleasure in the blood of the righteous? blood merely as blood? death merely as a debt of nature paid? suffering merely, as if suffering had in it mysterious virtue?

No, my brethren! God can be satisfied with that only which pertains to the conscience and the will; so says the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Sacrifices could never make the comers thereunto perfect." The Blood of Christ was sanctified by the Will with which He shed it: it is that which gives it value. It was a sacrifice offered up to conscience. He suffered as a Martyr to the Truth. He fell in fidelity to a cause. The sacred cause in which He fell was love to the human race: "Greater love hath no man than this that a man give his life for his friends." Now that Truth was the Cause in which Christ died. We have His own words as proof: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, *to bear witness to the Truth*."

Let us see how His death was a martyrdom of witness to Truth.

1. He proclaimed the identity between religion and goodness. He distinguished religion from correct views, accurate religious observances, and even from devout feelings. He said that to be religious is to be good. "Blessed are the pure in heart. . . . Blessed are the merciful. . . . Blessed are the meek." Justice, mercy, truth—these He proclaimed as the real righteousness of God.

But because He taught the truth of Godliness, the Pharisees became His enemies: those men of opinions and maxims: those men of ecclesiastical, ritual, and spiritual pretensions.

Again, He taught spiritual Religion. God was not in the temple: the temple was to come down. But Religion would survive the temple. God's temple was man's soul.

Because He taught spiritual worship, the priests became His enemies. Hence came those accusations that He blasphemed the temple: that He had said contemptuously, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

Once more, he struck a deathblow at Jewish exclusiveness: He proclaimed the truth of the character of God. God the Father: the hereditary descent from Abraham was nothing: the inheritance of Abraham's faith was everything. God therefore would admit the Gentiles who inherited that faith. For God loved the world, not a private few: not the Jew only, not the elder brother who had been all his life at home, but the prodigal younger brother too, who had wandered far and sinned much.

Now because He proclaimed this salvation of the Gentiles, the whole Jewish nation were offended. The first time he ever hinted it at Capernaum, they took Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built that they might throw Him thence.

And thus by degrees—priests, Pharisees, rulers, rich and poor—He had roused them all against Him: and the Divine Martyr of the Truth stood alone at last beside the cross, when the world's life was to be won, without a friend.

All this we must bear in mind, if we would understand the expression, "I sanctify myself." He was sanctifying and consecrating Himself for this—to be a Witness to the Truth—a devoted one, consecrated in His heart's-deeps to die—loyal to truth, even though it should have to give as the reward of allegiance, not honours and kingdoms, but only a crown of thorns.

3. The self-sanctification of Christ was for the sake of others. "For their sakes." . . .

He obeyed the law of self-consecration for Himself, else He had not been man; for that law is the universal law of our human existence. But He obeyed it not for Himself alone, but for others also. It was vicarious self-devotion, *i.e.* instead of others, as the Representative of

them. "For their sakes," as an example, "that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

Distinguish between a model and an example. You copy the outline of a model: you imitate the spirit of an example. Christ is our Example: Christ is not our Model. You might copy the life of Christ: make Him a model in every act: and yet you might be not one whit more of a Christian than before. You might wash the feet of poor fishermen as He did, live a wandering life with nowhere to lay your head. You might go about teaching, and never use any words but His words, never express a religious truth except in Bible language: have no home, and mix with publicans and harlots. Then Christ would be your model: you would have copied His life like a picture, line for line, and shadow for shadow; and yet you might not be Christlike.

On the other hand, you might imitate Christ, get His Spirit, breathe the atmosphere of thought which He breathed: do not one single act which He did, but every act in His spirit: you might be rich, whereas He was poor: never teach, whereas He was teaching always; lead a life in all outward particulars the very contrast and opposite of His: and yet the spirit of His self-devotion might have saturated your whole being, and penetrated into the life of every act and the essence of every thought. Then Christ would have become your Example: for we can only imitate that of which we have caught the spirit.

Accordingly, He sanctified Himself that He might become a living, inspiring example, firing men's hearts by love to imitation—a burning and a shining Light shed upon the mystery of Life, to guide by a spirit of warmth lighting from within. In Christ there is not given to us a faultless essay on the loveliness of self-consecration, to convince our reason how beautiful it is: but there is given to us a self-consecrated One: a living Truth, a living Person; a Life that was beautiful, a Death that we feel in our inmost hearts to have been Divine: and all this in order that the Spirit of that consecrated Life and consecrated Death, through love, and

wonder, and deep enthusiasm, may pass into us, and sanctify us also to the Truth in life and death. He sacrificed Himself that we might offer ourselves a living sacrifice to God.

II. Christ's sanctification of His people: "That they also might be sanctified through the truth."

To sanctify means two things. It means to devote, and it means to set apart. Yet these two meanings are but different sides of the same idea: for to be devoted to God is to be separated from all that is opposed to God.

Those whom Christ sanctifies are separated from two things: from the world's evil, and from the world's spirit.

1. From the world's evil. So in verse 15, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." Not from physical evil, not from pain: Christ does not exempt His own from such kinds of evil. Nay, we hesitate to call pain and sorrow evils, when we remember what bright characters they have made, and when we recollect that almost all who came to Christ came impelled by suffering of some kind or other. *E. g.* the Syrophenician woman had been driven to "fall at His feet and worship Him," by the anguish of the tormented daughter whom she had watched. It was a widow that cast into the treasury all her living, and that widow poor.

Possibly Want and Woe will be seen hereafter, when this world of Appearance shall have passed away, to have been, not evils, but God's blessed angels and ministers of His most parental love.

But the evil from which Christ's sanctification separates the soul is that worst of evils—properly speaking the only evil—sin: revolt from God, disloyalty to conscience, tyranny of the passions, strife of our self-will in conflict with the loving Will of God. This is our foe—our only foe that we have a right to hate with perfect hatred, meet it where we will, and under whatever form, in church or state, in false social maxims, or in our own hearts. And it was to sanctify or separate us from this that Christ sanctified or consecrated

Himself. By the blood of His anguish—by the strength of His unconquerable resolve—we are sworn against it—bound to be, or else sinning greatly, in a world of evil consecrated spirits.

Lastly, the self-devotion of Christ separates us from the world's spirit.

Distinguish between the world's evil and the world's spirit. Many things which cannot be classed amongst things evil are yet dangerous as things worldly.

It is one of the most difficult of all ministerial duties to define what the world-spirit is. It cannot be identified with vice, nor can unworldliness be defined as abstinence from vice. The Old Testament saints were many of them great transgressors. Abraham lied—Jacob deceived—David committed adultery. Crimes dark surely! and black enough! And yet these men were unworldly—the spirit of the world was not in them. They erred and were severely punished; for crime is crime in whomsoever it is found, and most a crime in a saint of God. But they were beyond their age: they were not of the world. They were strangers and pilgrims upon earth. They were, in the midst of innumerable temptations from within and from without, seeking after a better country, *i.e.* an heavenly.

Again, you cannot say that worldliness consists in mixing with many people, and unworldliness with few. Daniel was unworldly in the luxurious, brilliant court of Babylon: Adam, in Paradise, had but one companion; that *one* was the world to him.

Again, the spirit of the world cannot be defined as consisting in any definite plainness of dress or peculiar mode of living. If we would be sanctified from the world when Christ comes, we must be found not stripping off the ornaments from our persons, but the censoriousness from our tongues, and the selfishness from our hearts.

Once more, that which is a sign of unworldliness in one age is not a certain sign of it in another. In Daniel's age, when dissoluteness marked the world, frugal living was a sufficient evidence that he was not of the world. To say

that he restrained his appetites, was nearly the same as saying that he was sanctified. But now when intemperance is not the custom, a life as temperate as Daniel's might coexist with all that is worst of the spirit of the world in the heart; almost no man then was temperate who was not serving God—now hundreds of thousands are self-controlled by prudence, who serve the world and self.

Therefore you cannot define sanctification by any outward marks or rules. But he who will thoughtfully watch will understand what is this peculiar sanctification or separation from the world which Christ desired in His servants.

He is sanctified by the self-devotion of his Master from the world, who has a life in himself independent of the maxims and customs which sweep along with them other men. In his Master's words, "A well of water *in* him, springing up into everlasting life," keeping his life on the whole pure, and his heart fresh. His true life is hid with Christ in God. His motives, the aims and objects of his life, however inconsistent they may be with each other, however irregularly or feebly carried out, are yet on the whole above, not here. His citizenship is in heaven. He may be tempted—he may err—he may fall—but still in his darkest aberrations, there will be a something that keeps before him still the dreams and aspirations of his best days—a thought of the Cross of Christ, and the self-consecration that it typifies—a conviction that that is the Highest, and that alone the true Life. And that—if it were only that—would make him essentially different from other men, even when he mixes with them and seems to catch their tone, among them but not one of them. And that Life within him is Christ's pledge that he shall be yet what he longs to be—a something severing him, separating him, consecrating him. For him and for such as him the consecration prayer of Christ was made. "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world: Sanctify them through Thy Truth: Thy Word is Truth."

THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST

2 CORINTHIANS v. 14, 15.—"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."

IT may be, that in reading these verses some of us have understood them in a sense foreign to that of the apostle. It may have seemed that the arguments ran thus—Because Christ died upon the cross for *all*, therefore all must have been in a state of spiritual death before; and if they were asked what doctrines are to be elicited from this passage they would reply, "the doctrine of universal depravity, and the constraining power of the gratitude due to Him who died to redeem us from it." There is, however, in the first place, this fatal objection to such an interpretation, that the death here spoken of is used in two diametrically opposite senses. In reference to Christ, death literal—in reference to all, death spiritual. Now, in the thought of St. Paul, the death of Christ was always viewed as liberation from the power of evil: "in that he died, he died unto sin once," and again, "he that is dead is free from sin." The literal death then, in one clause, means *freedom* from sin; the spiritual death of the next is *slavery* to it. Wherein, then, lies the cogency of the apostle's reasoning? How does it follow that because Christ died to evil, all before that must have died to God? Of course that doctrine is true in itself, but it is *not* the doctrine of the text.

In the next place, the ambiguity belongs only to the English word—it is impossible to make the mistake in the original: the word which stands for *were*, is a word which does not imply a continued state, but must imply a single finished act. It cannot by any possibility imply that before the death of Christ men *were* in a state of death—it can only mean, they became dead at the moment when Christ

died. If you read it thus, the meaning of the English will emerge—"if one died for all, then all died;" and the apostle's argument runs thus, that if one acts as the representative of all, then his act is the act of all. If the ambassador of a nation makes reparation in a nation's name, or does homage for a nation, that reparation, or that homage, is the nation's act—if *one* did it *for* all, then *all* did it. So that instead of inferring that because Christ died for all, therefore before that all were dead to God, his natural inference is that therefore all are now dead to sin. Once more, the conclusion of the apostle is exactly the reverse of that which this interpretation attributes to him: he does not say that Christ died in order that men might *not* die, but exactly for this very purpose, that they *might;* and this death he represents in the next verse by an equivalent expression—the life of unselfishness: "that they which live might henceforth live not unto themselves." The "dead" of the first verse are "they that live" of the second.

The form of thought finds its exact parallel in Romans vi. 10, 11. Two points claim our attention:—

I. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ.
II. The influence of that sacrifice on man.

I. The vicariousness of the sacrifice is implied in the word "for." A vicarious act is an act done for another. When the Pope calls himself the vicar of Christ, he implies that he acts for Christ. The vicar or viceroy of a kingdom is one who acts for the king—a vicar's act therefore is virtually the act of the principal whom he represents; so that if the Papal doctrine were true, when the vicar of Christ *pardons*, Christ has pardoned. When the viceroy of a kingdom has published a proclamation or signed a treaty, the sovereign himself is bound by those acts.

The truth of the expression *for all*, is contained in this fact, that Christ is the representative of humanity—properly speaking, the reality of human nature. This is the

truth contained in the emphatic expression, "Son of Man." What Christ did *for* humanity was done by humanity, because in the name of humanity. For a truly vicarious act does not supersede the principal's duty of performance, but rather implies and acknowledges it. Take the case from which this very word of vicar has received its origin. In the old monastic times, when the revenues of a cathedral or a cure fell to the lot of a monastery, it became the duty of that monastery to perform the religious services of the cure. But inasmuch as the monastery was a corporate body, they appointed one of their number, whom they denominated their vicar, to discharge those offices for them. His service did not supersede theirs, but was a perpetual and standing acknowledgment that they, as a whole and individually, were under the obligation to perform it. The act of Christ is the act of humanity—that which all humanity is bound to do. His righteousness does not supersede our righteousness, nor does His sacrifice supersede our sacrifice. It is the representation of human life and human sacrifice—vicarious for all, yet binding upon all.

That He died for all is true—

1. Because He was the victim of the sin of all. In the peculiar phraseology of St. Paul, He died unto sin. He was the victim of sin—He died by sin. It is the appalling mystery of our redemption that the Redeemer took the attitude of subjection to evil. There was scarcely a form of evil with which Christ did not come in contact, and by which He did not suffer. He was the victim of false friendship and ingratitude, the victim of bad government and injustice. He fell a sacrifice to the vices of all classes—to the selfishness of the rich, and the fickleness of the poor; intolerance, formalism, scepticism, hatred of goodness, were the foes which crushed Him.

In the proper sense of the word He was a victim. He did not adroitly wind through the dangerous forms of evil, meeting it with expedient silence. Face to face, and front to front, He met it, rebuked it, and defied it; and just as truly as he is a voluntary victim whose body opposing the

progress of the car of Juggernaut is crushed beneath its monstrous wheels, was He a victim to the world's sin: because pure, He was crushed by impurity; because just and real and true, He waked up the rage of injustice, hypocrisy and falsehood.

Now this sin was the sin of all. Here arises at once a difficulty: it seems to be most unnatural to assert that in any one sense He was the sacrifice of the sin of all. We did not betray Him—that was Judas's act—Peter denied Him—Thomas doubted—Pilate pronounced sentence—it must be a figment to say that these were our acts; we did not watch Him like the Pharisees, nor circumvent Him like the Scribes and lawyers; by what possible sophistry can we be involved in the complicity of that guilt? The savage of New Zealand who never heard of Him, the learned Egyptian and the voluptuous Assyrian who died before He came; how was it the sin of all?

The reply that is often given to this query is wonderfully unreal. It is assumed that Christ was conscious, by His Omniscience, of the sins of all mankind; that the duplicity of the child, and the crime of the assassin, and every unholy thought that has ever passed through a human bosom, were present to His mind in that awful hour as if they were His own. This is utterly unscriptural. Where is the single text from which it can be, except by force, extracted? Besides this, it is fanciful and sentimental; and again it is dangerous, for it represents the whole Atonement as a fictitious and shadowy transaction. There is a mental state in which men have felt the burthen of sins which they did not commit. There have been cases in which men have been mysteriously excruciated with the thought of having committed the unpardonable sin. But to represent the mental phenomena of the Redeemer's mind as in any way resembling this—to say that His conscience was oppressed with the responsibility of sins which He had not committed—is to confound a state of sanity with the delusions of a half lucid mind, and the workings of a healthy conscience with those of one unnatural and morbid.

There is a way, however, much more appalling and much more true, in which this may be true, without resorting to any such fanciful hypothesis. Sin has a great power in this world: it gives laws like those of a sovereign, which bind us all, and to which we are all submissive. There are current maxims in church and state, in society, in trade, in law, to which we yield obedience. For this obedience every one is responsible; for instance, in trade, and in the profession of law, every one is the servant of practices the rectitude of which his heart can only half approve—every one complains of them, yet all are involved in them. Now, when such sins reach their climax, as in the case of national bankruptcy or an unjust acquittal, there may be some who are in a special sense the actors in the guilt; but evidently, for the bankruptcy, each member of the community is responsible in that degree and so far as he himself acquiesced in the duplicities of public dealing; every careless juror, every unrighteous judge, every false witness, has done his part in the reduction of society to that state in which the monster injustice has been perpetrated. In the riot of a tumultuous assembly by night, a house may be burnt, or a murder committed; in the eye of the law, all who are aiding and abetting there are each in his degree responsible for that crime; there may be difference in guilt, from the degree in which he is guilty who with his own hand perpetrated the deed, to that of him who merely joined the rabble from mischievous curiosity—degrees from that of wilful murder to that of more or less excusable homicide. The Pharisees were declared by the Saviour to be guilty of the blood of Zacharias, the blood of righteous Abel, and of all the saints and prophets who fell before He came. But how were the Pharisees guilty? They built the sepulchres of the prophets, they honoured and admired them; but they were guilty in that they were the children of those who slew the prophets; children in this sense, that they inherited their *spirit*, they opposed the good in the form in which it showed itself in *their day* just as their fathers opposed the form displayed to theirs; therefore He

said that they belonged to the same confederacy of evil, and that the guilt of the blood of all who had been slain should rest on that generation. Similarly we are guilty of the death of Christ. If you have been a false friend, a sceptic, a cowardly disciple, a formalist, selfish, an opposer of goodness, an oppressor, whatever evil you have done, in that degree and so far you participate in the evil to which the Just One fell a victim—you are one of that mighty rabble which cry, "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" for your sin He died; His blood lies at your threshold.

Again, He died for all, in that His sacrifice represents the sacrifice of all. We have heard of the doctrine of "imputed righteousness;" it is a theological expression to which meanings foolish enough are sometimes attributed, but it contains a very deep truth, which it shall be our endeavour to elicit.

Christ is the realized idea of our humanity. He is God's idea of man completed. There is every difference between the ideal and the actual—between what a man aims to be and what he is; a difference between the race as it is, and the race as it existed in God's creative idea when he pronounced it very good.

In Christ, therefore, God beholds humanity; in Christ He sees perfected every one in whom Christ's spirit exists in germ. He to whom the possible is actual, to whom what will be already *is*, sees all things *present*, gazes on the imperfect, and sees it in its perfection. Let me venture an illustration. He who has never seen the vegetable world except in Arctic regions, has but a poor idea of the majesty of vegetable life,—a microscopic red moss tinting the surface of the snow, a few stunted pines, and here and there perhaps a dwindled oak; but to the botanist who has seen the luxuriance of vegetation in its tropical magnificence, all that wretched scene presents another aspect; to him those dwarfs are the representatives of what might be, nay, what has been in a kindlier soil and a more genial climate; he fills up by his conception the miserable actuality presented by these shrubs, and attributes to them—imputes, that is, to

them—the majesty of which the undeveloped germ exists already. Now the difference between those trees seen in themselves, and seen in the conception of their nature's perfectness which has been previously realized, is the difference between man seen in himself and seen in Christ. We are feeble, dwarfish, stunted specimens of humanity. Our best resolves are but withered branches, our holiest deeds unripe and blighted fruit; but to the Infinite Eye, who sees in the perfect One the type and assurance of that which shall be, this dwindled humanity of ours is divine and glorious. Such are we in the sight of God the Father as is the very Son of God Himself. This is what theologians, at least the wisest of them, meant by "imputed righteousness." I do not mean that all who have written or spoken on the subject had this conception of it, but I believe they who thought truly meant this; they did not suppose that in imputing righteousness there was a kind of figment, a self-deception in the mind of God; they did not mean that by an act of will He chose to consider that every act which Christ did was done by us; that He imputed or reckoned to us the baptism in Jordan, and the victory in the wilderness, and the agony in the garden, or that He believed, or acted as if He believed, that when Christ died, each one of us died: but He saw humanity submitted to the law of self-sacrifice; in the light of that idea He beholds us as perfect, and is satisfied. In this sense the apostle speaks of those that are imperfect, yet "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." It is true, again, that He died for us, in that we present His sacrifice as ours. The value of the death of Christ consisted in the surrender of self-will. In the fortieth Psalm, the value of every other kind of sacrifice being first denied, the words follow, "Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." The profound idea contained, therefore, in the death of Christ is the duty of self-surrender.

But in *us* that surrender scarcely deserves the name; even to use the word self-sacrifice covers us with a kind of

shame. Then it is that there is an almost boundless joy in acquiescing in the life and death of Christ, recognising it as ours, and representing it to ourselves and God as what we aim at. If we cannot understand how in this sense it can be a sacrifice for us, we may partly realize it by remembering the joy of feeling how art and nature realize for us what we cannot realize for ourselves. It is recorded of one of the world's gifted painters that he stood before the master-piece of the great genius of his age—one which he could never hope to equal, nor even rival—and yet the infinite superiority, so far from crushing him, only elevated his feeling, for he saw realized those conceptions which had floated before him, dim and unsubstantial; in every line and touch he felt a spirit immeasurably superior, yet kindred, and he is reported to have exclaimed, with dignified humility, "And I too am a painter!" Or, again, we must all have felt, when certain effects in nature, combinations of form and colour, have been presented to us, our own idea speaking in intelligible and yet celestial language; when, for instance, the long bars of purple, "edged with intolerable radiance," seemed to float in a sea of pale pure green, when the whole sky seemed to reel with thunder, when the night-wind moaned. It is wonderful how the most commonplace men and women, beings who, as you would have thought, had no conception that rose beyond a commercial speculation, or a fashionable entertainment, are elevated by such scenes; how the slumbering grandeur of their nature wakes and acknowledges kindred with the sky and storm. "I cannot speak," they would say, "the feelings which are in me; I have had emotions, aspirations, thoughts; I cannot put them into words. Look there! listen now to the storm! That is what I meant, only I never could say it out till now." Thus do art and nature speak for us, and thus do we adopt them as our own. This is the way in which His righteousness becomes righteousness for us. This is the way in which the heart presents to God the sacrifice of Christ; gazing on that perfect Life we, as it were, say, "There, that is my religion—that is my righteousness—what I want to be

which I am not—that is my offering, my life as I would wish to give it, freely and not checked, entire and perfect." So the old prophets, their hearts big with unutterable thoughts, searched "what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory which should follow;" and so with us, until it passes into prayer: "My Saviour, fill up the blurred and blotted sketch which my clumsy hand has drawn of a divine life, with the fullness of Thy perfect picture. I feel the beauty which I cannot realize:—robe me in Thine unutterable purity:—

> "Rock of ages cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee."

II. The influence of that Sacrifice on man is the introduction of the principle of self-sacrifice into his nature,—"then were all dead." Observe again, not He died that we might not die, but that in His death we might be dead, and that in His sacrifice we might become each a sacrifice to God. Moreover, this death is identical with life. They who in the first sentence, are called dead, are in the second denominated "they who live." So in another place, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live;" death, therefore—that is the sacrifice of self—is equivalent to life. Now, this rests upon a profound truth. The death of Christ was a representation of the life of God. To me this is the profoundest of all truths, that the whole of the life of God is the sacrifice of self. God is Love; love is sacrifice—to give rather than to receive—the blessedness of self-giving. If the life of God were not such it would be a falsehood to say that God is Love; for, even in our human nature, that which seeks to enjoy all instead of giving all, is known by a very different name from that of love. All the life of God is a flow of this divine self-giving charity. Creation itself is sacrifice—the self-impartation of the divine Being. Redemption, too, is sacrifice, else it could not be love; for which reason we will not surrender one iota of the truth that the death of Christ

was the sacrifice of God—the manifestation once in time of that which is the eternal law of His life.

If man, therefore, is to rise into the life of God, he must be absorbed into the spirit of that sacrifice—he must die with Christ if he would enter into his proper life. For sin is the withdrawing into self and egotism, out of the vivifying life of God, which alone is our true life. The moment the man sins he dies. Know we not how awfully true that sentence is, "Sin revived, and I died?" The vivid life of sin is the death of the man. Have we never felt that our true existence has absolutely in that moment disappeared, and that *we* are not?

I say therefore, that real human life is a perpetual completion and repetition of the sacrifice of Christ—"all are dead;" the explanation of which follows, "to live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again." This is the truth which lies at the bottom of the Romish doctrine of the mass. Rome asserts that in the mass a true and proper sacrifice is offered up for the sins of all—that the offering of Christ is for ever repeated. To this Protestantism has objected vehemently, that there is but one offering once offered—an objection in itself entirely true; yet the Romish doctrine contains a truth which it is of importance to disengage from the gross and material form with which it has been overlaid. Let us hear St. Paul, "I fill up that which is behindhand of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church." Was there, then, something behindhand of Christ's sufferings remaining uncompleted, of which the sufferings of Paul could be in any sense the complement? He says there was. Could the sufferings of Paul for the Church in any form of correct expression be said to eke out the sufferings that were complete? In one sense it is true to say that there is one offering once offered for all. But it is equally true to say that that one offering is valueless, except so far as it is completed and repeated in the life and self-offering of all. This is the Christian's sacrifice. Not mechanically completed in the miserable materialism of the mass, but

spiritually in the life of all in whom the Crucified lives. The sacrifice of Christ is done over again in every life which is lived not to self but to God.

Let one concluding observation be made—self-denial, self-sacrifice, self-surrender! Hard doctrines, and impossible! Whereupon, in silent hours, we sceptically ask, Is this possible? is it natural? Let preacher and moralist say what they will, I am not here to sacrifice myself for others. God sent me here for happiness, not misery. Now introduce one sentence of this text of which we have as yet said nothing, and the dark doctrine becomes illuminated—"the *love* of Christ constraineth us." Self-denial, for the sake of self-denial, does no good; self-sacrifice for its own sake is no religious act at all. If you give up a meal for the sake of showing power over self, or for the sake of self-discipline, it is the most miserable of all delusions. You are not more religious in doing this than before. This is mere self-culture, and self-culture being occupied for ever about self, leaves you only in that circle of self from which religion is to free you; but to give up a meal that one you love may have it, is properly a religious act—no hard and dismal duty, because made easy by affection. To bear pain for the sake of bearing it has in it no moral quality at all, but to bear it rather than surrender truth, or in order to save another, is positive enjoyment as well as ennobling to the soul. Did you ever receive even a blow meant for another in order to shield that other? Do you not know that there was actual pleasure in the keen pain far beyond the most rapturous thrill of nerve which could be gained from pleasure in the midst of painlessness? Is not the mystic yearning of love expressed in words most purely thus, Let me suffer for him?

This element of love is that which makes this doctrine an intelligible and blessed truth. So sacrifice alone, bare and unrelieved, is ghastly, unnatural, and dead; but self-sacrifice, illuminated by love, is warmth and life; it is the death of Christ, the life of God, the blessedness and only proper life of man.

CAIAPHAS' VIEW OF VICARIOUS SACRIFICE

JOHN xi. 49-53.—"And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but also that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then, from that day forth, they took counsel together for to put him to death."

ON this occasion the first resolution passed the Jewish Sanhedrim to compass the death of Jesus. The immediate occasion of their meeting was the fame of the resurrection of Lazarus. There were many causes which made the Saviour obnoxious to the Priests and Pharisees. If that teaching were once received, their reign was over: a teaching which abolished the pretensions of a priesthood, by making every man his own priest, to offer spiritual sacrifices to God—which identified Religion with Goodness—making spiritual excellence, not ritual regularity, the righteousness which God accepts—which brought God within the reach of the sinner and the fallen—which simplified the whole matter by making Religion a thing of the heart, and not of rabbinical learning or theology:—Such teaching swept away all the exclusive pretensions of Pharisaism, made the life which they had been building up with so much toil for years, time wasted, and reduced their whole existence to a lie.

This was the ground of their hatred to the Son of Man. But this was not the ground which they put forward. He was tried chiefly on the charge of treason against the emperor; and the argument by which the mind of the judge was principally swayed, was, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend." The present passage contains the first trace of the adoption of that ground. "If we let Him alone, the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

Be it observed, then, the real ground of opposition was hatred of the light. The ostensible ground was patriotism, public zeal, loyalty, far-sighted policy: and such is life. The motive on which a deed of sin is done is not the motive which a man allows to others, or whispers to himself. Listen to the criminal receiving sentence, and the cause of condemnation is not the enormity of the crime, but the injustice of the country's law. Hear the man of disorderly life, whom society has expelled from her bosom, and the cause of the expulsion is not his profligacy, but the false slander which has misrepresented him. Take his own account of the matter, and he is innocent—injured—pure. For there are names so tender, and so full of fond endearment, with which this world sugars over its dark guilt towards God with a crust of superficial whiteness, that the Sin on which eighteen centuries have looked back appalled, to the doers of that Sin, was nothing atrocious, but respectable, defensible, nay even, under the circumstances, necessary.

The judgment of one of these righteous murderers was given in remarkable terms. Apparently there were some in the council, such men as Nicodemus, who could not acquiesce in the view given of the matter. Doubtless they alleged the unfairness of the proceeding, and the innocence of the Accused; upon which Caiaphas replied, "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." The remarkable point in this judgment is, that it contained the very central doctrine of Christianity: unconsciously Caiaphas had uttered the profoundest of all truths, the necessity of the suffering of the Innocent for the guilty. He had stated it in the very words which St. John could have himself adopted. But they meant one thing in the lips of holy Love, and quite another thing in the lips of tyrannical Policy. Yet St. John, contemplating that sentence years after, could not but feel that there was something in the words deeper than met the ear, a truth almost inspired, which he did not hesitate to call prophetic. "Being high priest that year, he *prophesied*."

We must not, therefore, call this merely a singular coincidence. It was the same truth viewed from different sides: the side of Caiaphas, and the side of John; the side of the world, and the side of God.—That truth was the vicarious Sacrifice of Christ.

And there are two ways in which you may contemplate that Sacrifice. Seen from the world's point of view, it is unjust, gross, cruel. Seen as John saw it, and as God looks at it, it was the sublimest of all truths; one which so entwines itself with our religious consciousness, that you might as soon tear from us our very being, as our convictions of the reality of Christ's Atonement. Our subject, then, is the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. The words of Caiaphas contain a formal falsehood and a material truth: the outward statement, and an inspired or prophetic inward verity—so that the subject branches into two topics:—

I. The human form, in which the words are false.
II. The divine principle or spirit, in which they are true.

I. The human form, in which the words are false.

Vicarious means in the stead of. When the Pope calls himself the vicar of Christ, he means that he is empowered in the stead of Christ to absolve, decree, &c. When we speak of vicarious suffering, we mean that suffering which is endured in another's stead, and not as the sufferer's own desert.

1. The first falsity in the human statement of that truth of vicarious sacrifice is its injustice. Some one said the Accused is innocent. The reply was—Better that one should die than many. "It is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." It was simply with Caiaphas a question of numbers: the unjust expediency of wresting the law a little to do much apparent good. The reply to that was plain. Expediency cannot obliterate Right and Wrong. Expediency may choose the best possible when the conceivable best is not attainable; but in right and wrong there is

no better and best. Thou *shalt* not do wrong. Thou *must* not: you may not tell a lie to save life. Better that the whole Jewish nation should perish than that a Jewish legislature should steep its hand in the blood of one innocent. It is *not* expedient to do injustice.

There are cases in which it is expedient to choose the sacrifice of one instead of that of many—when a whole army or regiment has mutinied, the commander, instead of general butchery, may select a few to perish as examples to the rest. There is nothing here unjust. The many escape, but the few who die deserved to die. But no principle could justify a commander in selecting an innocent man, condemning him by unjust sentence, and affecting to believe that he was guilty, while the transgressors escaped, and learned the enormity of their transgressions by seeing execution done upon the guiltless. No principle can justify—nothing can do more than palliate the conduct of the ship's crew upon the raft who slay one of their number to support their existence on his flesh. No man would justify the parent, pursued in his chariot by wolves over Siberian snows, who throws out one of his children to the pack, that the rest may escape while their fangs are buried in their victim. You feel at once, expediency has no place here. Life is a trifle compared with Law. Better that all should perish by a visitation of God than that they should be saved by one murder.

I do not deny that this aspect has been given to the sacrifice of Christ. It has been represented as if the majesty of Law demanded a victim: and so as it glutted its insatiate thirst, one victim would do as well as another—the purer and the more innocent the better. It has been exhibited as if Eternal Love resolved in fury to strike, and so as He had His blow, it mattered not whether it fell on the whole world, or on the precious head of His own chosen Son.

Unitarianism has represented the Scriptural view in this way: or rather, perhaps, we should say, it has been so represented to Unitarianism—and, from a view so horrible,

no wonder if Unitarianism has recoiled. But it is not our fault if some blind defenders of the truth have converted the self-devotion of Love into a Brahminical sacrifice. If the Work of Redemption be defended by parallels drawn from the most atrocious records and principles of Heathenism, let not the fault be laid upon the Bible. We disclaim that as well as they. It makes God a Caiaphas.—It makes Him adopt the words of Caiaphas in the sense of Caiaphas. It represents Him in terms which better describe the ungoverned rage of Saul, missing his stroke at David, who has offended, and in disappointed fury dashing his javelin at his own son Jonathan.

You must not represent the Atonement as depending on the justice of unrighteous expediency.

2. This side of viewing the truth was the side of selfishness. It was not even the calm resolve of men balancing whether it be better for one to die or many; but whether it is better that He or we should perish. It is conceivable in the case supposed above, that a parent in the horrible dilemma should be enough bewildered to resolve to sacrifice one rather than lose all; but it is not conceivable that the doubt in his mind should be this, Shall *I* and the rest perish or this one?—yet this was the spirit in which the party of Caiaphas spoke. The Romans will come and take away *our* place and *our* nation.

And this spirit, too, is in human nature. The records of antiquity are full of it. If a fleet could not sail, it was assumed that the deities were offended. The purest and tenderest maiden of the royal household was selected to bleed upon the altar: and when the sharp knife passed to her innocent heart, this was the feeling in the bosoms of those stern and unrelenting warriors—of the blood and of the stock of Caiaphas—Better she should suffer than we.

This *may* be the way in which the sacrifice of Christ is regarded by us. There is a kind of acquiescence in the Atonement which is purely selfish. The more bloody the representation of the character of God, the greater of course the satisfaction in feeling sheltered from it. The

more wrath instead of Love is believed to be the Divine name, the more may a man find joy in believing that he is safe. It is the Siberian feeling: the innocent has glutted the wolves; and we may pursue our journey in safety. Christ has suffered, and I am safe. He bore the agony —I take the reward: I may now live with impunity: and, of course, it is very easy to call acquiescence in that arrangement humility, and to take credit for the abnegation of self-righteousness: but whoever can acquiesce in that thought chiefly in reference to personal safety, and without desiring to share the Redeemer's Cross, aspire to enjoy the comforts and the benefits of the Redeemer's sacrifice, has but something of the spirit of Caiaphas after all, the spirit which contentedly sacrifices Another for self—selfishness assuming the form of wisdom.

II. We pass to the prophetic or hidden spirit in which these words are true.

I observe, first, that vicarious sacrifice is the Law of Being. It is a mysterious and fearful thing to observe how all God's universe is built upon this law, how it penetrates and pervades all Nature, so that if it were to cease, Nature would cease to exist. Hearken to the Saviour himself expounding this principle:—"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." We are justified, therefore, in assuming the Law of Nature to be the Law of His own Sacrifice, for He himself represents it as the parallel.

Now observe this world of God's. The mountain-rock must have its surface rusted into putrescence and become dead soil, before the herb can grow. The destruction of the mineral is the life of the vegetable. Again the same process begins. The "corn of wheat dies," and out of death more abundant life is born. Out of the soil in which deciduous leaves are buried, the young tree shoots vigorously, and strikes its roots deep down into the realm of decay and death. Upon the life of the vegetable world, the myriad forms of higher life sustain themselves—still the same law:

the sacrifice of life to give life. Further still. Have we never pondered over that mystery of nature—the dove struck down by the hawk—the deer trembling beneath the stroke of the lion—the winged fish falling into the jaws of the dolphin? It is the solemn law of vicarious sacrifice again. And as often as man sees his table covered with the flesh of animals slain, does he behold, whether he think of it or not, the deep mystery and law of being. They have surrendered their innocent lives that he may live. Nay, further still—it is as impossible for man to live as it is for man to be redeemed, except through vicarious suffering. The anguish of the mother is the condition of the child's life. His very being has its roots in the law of sacrifice; and from his birth onwards, instinctively this becomes the law which rules his existence. There is no blessing which was ever enjoyed by man which did not come through this. There was never a country cleared for civilisation, and purified of its swamps and forests, but the first settlers paid the penalty of that which their successors enjoy. There never was a victory won, but the conquerors who took possession of the conquest passed over the bodies of the noblest slain, who died that they might win.

Now observe, all this is the Law obeyed, either unconsciously or else instinctively. But in the redemption of our humanity, a moment comes when that law is recognised as the will of God adopted *consciously*, and voluntarily obeyed as the law of man's existence. Then it is that man's true nobleness, his only possible blessedness, and his redemption from blind instincts and mere selfishness, begin. You may evade that law—you may succeed in living as Caiaphas did, sacrificing others, instead of yourself—and men will call you wise, and prudent, and respectable. But you are only a Caiaphas:—Redeemed you are not. Your proper humanity has not begun.

The Highest man recognised that Law, and joyfully embraced it as the law of His existence. It was the consciousness of His surrender to that as God's will, and the

voluntariness of the act, which made it sacrifice. Hear Him: "No man taketh My life from Me. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again." "*This commandment have I received from My Father.*" Had He been by the wiles of Caiaphas simply surprised and dragged struggling and reluctant to doom, He would have been a victim, but not a sacrifice—He would have been an object of our compassion, but by no means of our admiring wonder. It was the foresight of all the result of His opposition to the world's sin, and His steady uncompromising battle against it notwithstanding, in every one of its forms, knowing that He must be its victim at the last, which prevented His death from being merely the death of a lamb slain unconsciously on Jewish altars, and elevated it to the dignity of a True and proper Sacrifice.

We go beyond this, however. It was not merely a sacrifice, it was a sacrifice for sin. "His soul was made an offering for sin." Neither was it only a sacrifice for sin,—it was a sacrifice for the *world's* sin. In the text, "that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

Two ideas are necessary to be distinctly apprehended by us in order to understand that—the first is the notion of Punishment, the second is the idea of the world's sin.

By punishment is simply meant the penalty annexed to transgression of a law. Punishment is of two kinds: the penalty which follows ignorant transgression, and the chastisement which ensues upon wilful disobedience. The first of these is called imputed guilt, the second is actual guilt. By imputed guilt is meant, in theological language, that a person is treated as if he were guilty:—if, for example, you approach too near the whirling wheel of steam machinery, the mutilation which follows is the punishment of temerity. If the traveller ignorantly lays his hand on the cockatrice's den, the throb of the envenomed fang is the punishment of his ignorance. He has broken a law of nature—and the

guilt of the infection is imputed to him—there is penalty: but there is none of the chastisement which follows sin. His conscience is not made miserable. He only suffers.

Further,—according to the constitution of this world, it is not only our own transgressions of ignorance, but besides, the faults of others, which bring pain and sorrow on us. The man of irritable and miserably nervous temperament owes that often to a father's intemperance. Many a man has to struggle all his life with the penury which he reaps as the harvest of a distant ancestor's extravagance. In the strictest sense of the word, these are punishments; the consequences annexed to transgression: and, in the language of theology, they are called imputed guilt. But there is an all-important distinction between them and the chastisements of personal iniquity. If a man suffer ill health or poverty as the results of his own misconduct, his conscience forces him to refer this to the wrath of God. He is reaping as he had sown, and the miseries of conscious fault are added to his penalty. But if such things come as the penalty of the wrong of others, then, philosophically though you may call them punishment, in the popular sense of the word they are no punishments at all, but rather corrective discipline, nay, even richest blessings, if they are received from a Father's hand, and transmuted by humbleness into the means of spiritual growth.

Apply all this to the sacrifice of Christ. Let no man say that Christ bore the wrath of God. Let no man say that God was angry with His Son. We are sometimes told of a mysterious anguish which Christ endured, the consequence of Divine wrath, the sufferings of a heart laden with the conscience of the world's transgressions, which He was bearing as if they were His own sins. Do not add to the Bible what is not in the Bible. The Redeemer's conscience was not bewildered to feel that as His own, which was not His own. He suffered no wrath of God. Twice came the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am *well pleased*." There was seen an angel strengthening Him. Nay, even to the last, never did the consciousness

of purity and the Father's Love forsake Him. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Christ came into collision with the world's evil, and He bore the penalty of that daring. He approached the whirling wheel, and was torn in pieces. He laid His hand upon the cockatrice's den, and its fangs pierced Him. It is the law which governs the conflict with evil. It can be only crushed by suffering from it. . . . The Son of man who puts His naked foot on the serpent's head, crushes it: but the fang goes into His heel.

The Redeemer bore imputed sin. He bore the penalty of others' sin. He was punished. Did He bear the anger of the Most High? Was His the hell of an accusing conscience?—In the Name of Him who is God, not Caiaphas, never. Something more, however, is necessary to complete our notion of Punishment. It is a right estimate of Law. We are apt to think of Punishment as something quite arbitrary, which can be remitted or changed at will. Hence we almost always connect it with the idea of wrath. Hence the heathen tried to bribe and coax their deities to spare. And hence the sacrifice of Christ comes to be looked upon in the light of a sagacious or ingenious contrivance, a mere "scheme." Now remember what Law is. The moral Laws of this universe are as immutable as God Himself. Law is the Being of God. God cannot alter those laws: He cannot make wrong right. He cannot make Truth falsehood, nor falsehood truth. He cannot make sin blessed, nor annex hell to innocence. Law moves on its majestic course irresistible. If His chosen Son violates Law, and throws Himself from the pinnacle, He dies. If you resist a law in its eternal march, the universe crushes you, that is all. Consider what Law is, and then the idea of bloody vengeance passes away altogether from the Sacrifice. It is not "an eye for an eye," and "a tooth for a tooth," in the sanguinary spirit of the old retaliatory legislation. It is the eternal impossibility of violating that law of the universe whereby penalty is annexed to transgression, and must fall, either laden with curse, or rich in blessing.

The second idea which it behoves us to master is that of the world's sin. The Apostle John always viewed sin as a great connected principle; *One;* a single world-spirit—exactly as the electricity with which the universe is charged is indivisible, imponderable, one, so that you cannot separate it from the great ocean of fluid. The electric spark that slumbers in the dew-drop is part of the flood which struck the oak. Had that spark not been there, it could be demonstrated that the whole previous constitution of the universe might have been different, and the oak not have been struck.

Let us possess ourselves of this view of sin, for it is the true one. Separate acts of sin are but manifestations of one great principle. It was thus that the Saviour looked on the sins of His day. The Jews of that age had had no hand in the murder of Abel or Zacharias; but they were of kindred spirit with the men who slew them. Condemning their murderers, they imitated their act. In that imitation they "allowed the deeds of their fathers;" they shared in the guilt of the act which had been consummated, because they had the spirit which led to it. "The blood of them all shall come on this generation." It was so, too, that Stephen looked on the act of his assassins. When God's glory streamed upon his face, he felt that the transaction going on then was not simply the violence of a mob in an obscure corner of the world: it was an outbreak of the Great Principle of evil.—He saw in their act the resurrection of the spirit of those who had "resisted the Holy Ghost" in their day, slain the prophets, opposed Moses, crucified "the just one," and felt that their genuine descendants were now opposing themselves to the form in which Truth and Goodness were appearing in their day.

It is in this way only that you will be able with any reality of feeling to enter into the truth that your sins nailed Him to the cross; that the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all: that He died "not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." If, for instance,

indisputable evidence be given of the saintliness of a man whose creed and views are not yours, and rather than admit that Good in him is Good, you invent all manner of possible motives to discredit his excellence, then let the thought arise—This is the resurrection of the spirit which was rampant in the days of Jesus; the spirit of those who saw the purest Goodness, and rather than acknowledge it to be good, preferred to account for it as diabolical power. Say to yourself—I am verging on the spirit of the sin that was unpardonable—I am crucifying the Son of God afresh. If in society you hear the homage unrebuked,—Honour to the rich man's splendid offering, instead of glory to the widow's humble mite—if you see the weak and defenceless punished severely for the sins which the great and strong do unblushingly, and even with the connivance and admiration of society—if you find sins of frailty placed on the same level with sins of pride and presumption—or if you find guilt of any kind palliated instead of mourned, then let the dreadful thought arise in the fulness of its meaning—I allow the deeds of those days—His blood shall come upon this generation. My sin, and your sin, the sin of all, bears the guilt of the Redeemer's sacrifice. It *was* vicarious—He suffered for what He never did. "Not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad."

To conclude—Estimate rightly the Death of Christ. It was not simply the world's example—it was the world's sacrifice. He died not merely as a Martyr to the Truth. His death is the world's life. Ask ye what life is? Life is not exemption from penalty. Salvation is not escape from suffering and punishment. The Redeemer suffered punishment: but the Redeemer's soul had blessedness in the very midst of punishment. Life is elevation of soul—nobleness—Divine character. The spirit of Caiaphas was death: to receive all, and give nothing: to sacrifice others to himself. The spirit of Christ was life; to give and not receive: to be sacrificed, and not to sacrifice. Hear Him again—"He that loseth his life, the same shall find it." That is life: The

spirit of losing all for Love's sake. That is the soul's life which alone is blessedness and heaven. By realizing that ideal of humanity, Christ furnished the Life which we appropriate only when we enter into His spirit.

Listen:—Only by renouncing sin is His death to sin yours—only by quitting it are you free from the guilt of His blood, only by voluntary acceptance of the law of the Cross, self-surrender to the will of God, and self-devotion to the good of others as the law of your being, do you enter into that present and future heaven which is the purchase of His vicarious sacrifice.

CHRIST'S WAY OF DEALING WITH SIN

MARK ii. 8–11.—"And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?—Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, *Thy* sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?—But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy),—I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house."

THIS anecdote is doubtless a familiar one to us all.

The Son of God was teaching in a house full of listeners, round which crowds were pressing. The friends of a poor palsied man desired His aid. It was scarcely possible for one person to edge his way through the press, where all longed to hear, and none of the crowd were likely to give place; but, for the cumbrous apparatus of a pallet borne by four, it was impossible. Therefore they ascended by the outside staircase, which, in Oriental countries leads to the flat roof, which they broke up, and let their friend down in

the midst before Jesus. No doubt this must have struck every one. But the impression produced on the spectators would probably have been very different from that produced on Christ. They that saw the bed descending from the roof over the heads of all, and who had before seen the fruitless efforts that had been made to get in, and now remembered that he who had been farthest from Christ was unexpectedly in a few minutes nearest to Him, could not have withheld that applause which follows a successful piece of dexterity. They would have admired the perseverance, or the ingenuity, or the inventiveness.

On none of these qualities did Christ fix as an explanation of the fact. He went deeper. He traced it to the deepest source of power that exists in the mind of man. "When Jesus saw their *faith*." For as love is deepest in the Being of God, so faith is the mightiest principle in the soul of man. Let us distinguish their several essences. Love is the essence of the Deity—that which makes it Deity. Faith is the essence of Humanity, which constitutes it what it is. And, as here, it is the warring principle of this world which wins in life's battle. No wonder that it is written in Scripture—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." No wonder it is said, "All things are possible to him that believeth." It is that which wrestles with difficulty, removes mountains, tramples upon impossibilities. It is this spirit which in the common affairs of life, known as a "sanguine temperament," never says impossible and never believes in failure, leads the men of the world to their most signal successes, making them believe a thing possible because they hope it; and giving substantial reality to that which before was a shadow and a dream.

It was this "substance of things hoped for" that gave America to Columbus, when billows, miles deep, rose between him and the land, and the men he commanded well-nigh rose in rebellion against the obstinacy which believed in "things not yet seen." It was this that crowned the Mahommedan arms for seven centuries with victory: so long as they believed

themselves the Champions of the One God with a mission from Him, they were invincible. And it is this which so often obtains for some new system of medicine the honour of a cure, when the real cause of cure is only the patient's trust in the remedies.

So it is in religion. For Faith is not something heard of in theology alone, created by Christianity, but it is one of the commonest principles of life. He that believes a blessing is to be got, that "God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him," will venture much, and will likewise win much. For, as with this palsied man, faith is inventive, ever fertile in expedients—like our own English character, never knowing when it has been foiled; and then nearest victory at the very moment when the last chance has seemed to fail. We divide our subject into—

I. The malady presented to Christ.
II. His treatment of it.

I. The malady, apparently, was nothing more than palsy. But not as such did Jesus treat it. The bystanders might have been surprised at the first accost of Jesus to the paralytic man. It was not, "Take up thy bed and walk;" but "Thy sins be forgiven thee." As with their faith, so it was here. He went deeper than perseverance or ingenuity. He goes deeper than the outward evil; down to *the* evil, the root of all evil, properly the only evil—Sin. He read in that sufferer's heart a deeper wish than appeared in the outward act, the consequences of a burden worse than palsy, the longing for a rest more profound than release from pain—the desire to be healed of guilt. It was in reply to this tacit application that the words "Thy sins be forgiven thee" were spoken.

Now, sin has a twofold set of consequences—1. The natural consequences. 2. The moral consequences.

1. By the natural, we mean those results which come inevitably in the train of wrong-doing, by what we call the laws of nature visiting themselves on the outward condition

of a sinner, by which sin and suffering are linked together. As for example, when an intemperate man ruins his health, or an extravagant man leaves himself broken in fortune; or when tyrannical laws bring an uprising of a people against a tyrant:—these are respectively the natural penalties of wrong-doing.

Here, apparently, palsy had been the natural result of sin; for otherwise the address of Christ was out of place, and meaningless. And what we are concerned to remark is, that these natural consequences of sin are often invisible as well as inevitable. Probably not one of the four friends who bore him suspected such a connection. Possibly not even his physician. But there were two at least to whom the connection was certain—the conscience of the palsied man himself, whose awakened memory traced back the trembling of those limbs to the acts of a youth long past: and to the all-seeing eye of Him to whom Past, Present, and Future, are but one.

And such experience, brethren, doubtless, is true much oftener than we imagine. The irritable temperament, the lost memory which men bewail, the over-sensitive brain, as if causeless—who can tell how they stand connected with sins done long ago? For nothing here stands alone and causeless. Every man, with his strength and his weaknesses, stunted in body or dwarfed in heart, palsied in nerve or deadened in sensibility, is the exact result and aggregate of all the past—all that has been done by himself, and all that has been done by his ancestors, remote or near. The Saviour saw in this palsied man the miserable wreck of an ill-spent life.

2. Now quite distinct from these are the moral consequences of guilt: by which I mean those which tell upon the character and inward being of the man who sins. In one sense, no doubt, it is a *natural* result, inasmuch as it is by a law, regular and unalterable, a man becomes by sin deteriorated in character, or miserable. Now these are twofold, negative and positive—the loss of some blessing: or the accruing of some evil to the heart. Loss—as when by

sinning we lose the capacity for all higher enjoyments; for none can sin without blunting his sensibilities. He has lost the zest of a pure life, the freshness and the flood of happiness which come to every soul when it is delicate, and pure, and natural. This is no light loss. If any one here congratulates himself that sin has brought to him no positive misery, my brother, I pray you to remember that God's worst curse was pronounced upon the serpent tempter. Apparently it was far less than that pronounced on the woman, but really it was far more terrible. Not pain, not shame—no, these are remedial, and may bring penitence at last,—but to sink the angel in the animal—the spirit in the flesh; to be a reptile, and to eat the dust of degradation as if it were natural food. Eternity has no damnation deeper than that.

Then, again, positive—the dark and dreadful loneliness that comes from doing wrong—a conscious unrest which plunges into business, or pleasure, or society, not for the love of these things, but to hide itself from itself as Adam did in the trees of the garden, because it dare not hear the Voice of God, nor believe in His Presence. Do we not know something of a self-reproach and self-contempt, which alternating at times with pride almost tear the soul asunder in part? And such was the state of this man. His pains were but the counterpart and reflection of a deeper sorrow. Pain had laid him on a bed, and said to him, "Lie there face to face with God—and think!" We pass on now to consider—

II. Christ's treatment of that malady.

By the declaration of God's forgiveness. Brethren, if the Gospel of our Master mean anything it means this—the blotting out of sin: "To declare His righteousness in the remission of sins that are past." It is the declaration of the highest name of God—Love. Let us understand what forgiveness is. The forgiveness of God acts upon the moral consequences of sin directly and immediately; on the natural, mediately and indirectly.

Upon the moral consequences directly. Remorse passes into penitence and love. There is no more loneliness, for God has taken up His abode there. No more self-contempt, for he whom God has forgiven learns to forgive himself. There is no more unrest, for "being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Then the fountains of the great deep are broken up, and unwonted happy tears can come—as with the woman in the gospels. I pray you to observe that this comes directly, with no interval—"Being justified by faith." For God's Love is not an offer but a gift;—not clogged with conditions, but free as the air we breathe.

Upon the natural consequences, not directly, but indirectly and mediately. The forgiveness of Christ did not remove the palsy; that was the result of a separate, distinct act of Christ. It is quite conceivable that it might never have been removed at all—that he might have been forgiven, and the palsy suffered to remain. God might have dealt with him as He did in David's case:—on his repentance there came to him the declaration of God's pardon, his person was accepted, the moral consequences were removed, but the natural consequences remained. "The Lord hath put away thy sin, nevertheless the child which is born to thee shall die."

Consider, too, that without a miracle, they *must* have remained in this man's case. It is so in every-day life. If the intemperate man repents he will receive forgiveness, but will that penitence give him back the steady hand of youth? Or if the suicide between the moment of draining the poisoned cup and that of death repent of his deed, will that arrest the operation of the poison? A strong constitution or the physician may possibly save life; but penitence has nothing to do with it. Say that the natural penal consequence of crime is the scaffold:—Did the pardon given to the dying thief unnail his hands? Did Christ's forgiveness interfere with the natural consequences of his guilt?

And thus, then, we are brought to a very solemn and awful consideration, awful because of its truth and simplicity.

The consequences of past deeds remain. They have become part of the chain of the universe—effects which now are causes, and will work and interweave themselves with the history of the world for ever. You cannot undo your acts. If you have depraved another's will, and injured another's soul, it may be in the grace of God that hereafter you will be personally accepted and the consequences of your guilt inwardly done away, but your penitence cannot undo the evil you have done, and God's worst punishment may be that you may have to gaze half frantic on the ruin you have caused, on the evil you have done, which you might have left undone, but which being done, is now beyond your power for ever. This is the eternity of human acts. The forgiveness of God—the blood of Christ itself does not undo the past.

And yet even here the grace of God's forgiveness is not in vain. It cannot undo the natural consequences of sin, but it may, by His mercy, transform them into blessings. For example, suppose this man's palsy to have been left still with him, himself accepted, his soul at peace. Well, he is thenceforth a crippled man. But crippling, pain—are these necessarily evils? Do we not say continually that sorrow and pain are God's loving discipline given to His legitimate children, to be exempt from which were no blessing, proving them to be "bastards and not sons"? And why should not that palsy be such to him, though it was the result of his own fault? Once, when it seemed in the light of a guilty conscience only the foretaste of coming doom—the outward a type of the inward, every pang sending him farther from God, it was a curse. Now, when penitence and love had come, and that palsy was received with patience, meekness, why may it not be a blessing? What makes the outward events of life blessings or the reverse? Is it not all from ourselves? Did not dissolution become quite another thing by the Fall—changed into *death;* assuming thereby an entirely altered character: no longer felt as a natural blessed herald, becoming the messenger of God, summoning to higher life, but now obtaining that

strange name—the "king of terrors"? And in Christ, death becomes our minister again: "Ours," as St. Paul says, "with all other things." The Cross of Christ has restored to death something more blessed than its original peacefulness. A sleep now: not death at all. And will not a changed heart change all things around us, and make the worst consequence of our own misdoing minister to our eternal welfare? So that God's forgiveness, assured to us in the Cross of Christ, is a complete remedy for sin, acting on its natural consequences by transformation indirectly; on its moral results directly, removing them.

Lastly, let us learn from this the true aim and meaning of Miracles. Let us attend to the account our Master gives us of the reason why he performed this miracle. Read verses 9, 10. To say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," was easy, for no visible result could test the saying. To say, "Take up thy bed and walk," was not apparently so easy, for failure would cover with confusion. He said the last, leaving the inference—If I can do the most difficult, then, of course, I can do the easier. Here we have the true character of a miracle: it is the outward manifestation of the power of God, in order that we may believe in the power of God in things that are invisible.

Now, contrast this with the popular view. Miracles are commonly reckoned as proofs of Christ's mission, accrediting His other truths, and making them, which would be otherwise incredible, evidently from God. I hesitate not to say that nowhere in the New Testament are they spoken of in this way. When the Pharisees asked for evidences—and signs—His reply was, "There shall no sign be given you." So said St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians—not signs, but "Christ crucified." He had no conception of our modern notion of miracles—things chiefly valuable because they can be collected into a portable volume of evidences to prove that God is Love: that we should love one another: that He is the Father of all men. These need no proofs, they are like the sun shining by his own light.

Christ's glorious miracles were not to prove these, but that through the seen the unseen might be known; to show, as it were, by specimens, the Living Power which works in ordinary as well as extraordinary cases. For instance here, to show that the One who is *seen* to say with power, "Take up thy bed and walk," arresting the natural consequences of sin, is actually, though unseen, arresting its moral consequences. Or, again, that He who bade the waves "Be still" in Galilee is holding now, at this moment, the winds in the hollow of His hand. That He who healed the sick and raised the dead, holds now and ever in His Hand the issues of life and death. For the Marvellous is to show the source of the Common. Miracles were no concession to that infidel spirit which taints our modern Christianity, and which cannot believe in God's presence, except it can see Him in the supernatural. Rather, they were to make us feel that all is marvellous, all wonderful, all pervaded with a Divine Presence, and that the simplest occurrences of life are miracles.

In conclusion. Let me address those who, like this sufferer, are in any degree conscious either of the natural or moral results of sin, working in them. It is apparently a proud and a vain thing for a minister of Christ, himself tainted with sin, feeling himself, perhaps more than any one else can feel, the misery of a palsied heart, for such an one to give advice to his brother men; but it must be done, for he is but the mouthpiece of truths greater than himself, truths which are facts, whether he can feel them all or not. Therefore, if there be one among us who in the central depths of his soul is conscious of a Voice pronouncing the past accursed, the present awful, and the future terrible—I say to him, Lose no time in disputing, as these scribes did, some Church question, "whether the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins;" nor whether ecclesiastical etiquette permits you to approach God in this way or in that way—a question as impertinent as it would have been for the palsied man to debate whether social propriety permitted him to approach the Saviour as he did, instead of

through the door. My Christian brethren, if the crowd of difficulties which stand between your soul and God succeed in keeping you away, all is lost. Right into the Presence you must force your way, with no concealment, baring the soul, with all its ailments, before Him, asking, not the arrest of the consequences of sin, but the "cleansing of the conscience from dead works to serve the living God;" so that if you must suffer you shall suffer as a forgiven man.

This is the time! Wait not for another opportunity nor for different means. For the saying of our Lord is ever fulfilled, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

RECONCILIATION BY CHRIST

COLOSSIANS i. 21.—"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled."

THERE are two, and only two kinds of goodness possible: the one is the goodness of those who have never erred: the other is the goodness of those who having erred, have been recovered from their error. The first is the goodness of those who have never offended; the second is the goodness of those who, having offended, have been reconciled. In the infinite possibilities of God's universe, it may be that there are some who have attained the first of these kinds of righteousness. It may be that amongst the heavenly hierarchies there are those who have kept their first estate, whose performances have been commensurate with their aspirations, who have never known the wretchedness, and misery, and degradation of a Fall. But whether it be so or not is a matter of no practical importance to us. It may be a question speculatively interesting, but it is practically

useless, for it is plain that such righteousness never can be ours. The only religion possible to man is the religion of penitence. The righteousness of man cannot be the integrity of the virgin citadel which has never admitted the enemy; it can never be more than the integrity of the city which has been surprised and roused, and which, having expelled the invader with blood in the streets, has suffered great inward loss.

Appointed to these two kinds of righteousness there are two kinds of happiness. To the first is attached the blessing of entire ignorance of the stain, pollution, and misery of guilt—a blessed happiness; but it may be that it is not the greatest. To the happiness resulting from the other is added a greater strength of emotion; it may not have the calmness and peace of the first, but, perhaps, in point of intensity and fulness it is superior. It may be that the highest happiness can only be purchased through suffering: and the language of the Bible almost seems to authorize us to say, that the happiness of penitence is deeper, and more blessed than the happiness of the righteousness that has never fallen, could be.

There are two kinds of friendship, that which has never had a shock, and that which after having been doubted is at last made sure. The happiness of this last is perhaps the greater. Such seems to be the truth implied in the parable of the Prodigal Son: in the robe, and the ring, and the fatted calf, and the music, and dancing, and the rapture of a father's embrace: and once more, in those words of our Redeemer, "There is more joy among the angels of heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance." All these seem to tell of the immeasurable blessedness of penitence.

And this, then, is our subject, the subject of Reconciliation.

But the text divides itself into two branches: in the first place, Estrangement; in the second place, Reconciliation.

Estrangement is thus described: "You that were sometime" (that is, once,) "alienated and enemies in your mind

by wicked works:" in which there are three things. The first is the cause of the estrangement—wicked works; the second is the twofold order; and thirdly, the degree of that estrangement; first of all, mere alienation, afterwards hostility, enmity.

And first of all, we consider the cause of the estrangement—"wicked works." Wicked works are voluntary deeds; they are not involuntary, but voluntary wrong. There is a vague way in which we sometimes speak of sin, in which it is possible for us to lose the idea of its guilt, and also to lose the idea of personal responsibility. We speak of sin sometimes as if it were a foreign disease introduced into the constitution; an imputed guilt arising from an action not our own, but of our ancestors. It is never so that the Bible speaks of sin. It speaks of it as wicked works, voluntary deeds, voluntary acts; that you, a responsible individual, have done acts which are wrong, of the mind, the hand, the tongue. The infant is by no means God's enemy; he may become God's enemy, but it can only be by voluntary action after conscience has been aroused. This our Master's words teach, when He tells us, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven." And such again, is the mystery of Christian baptism. It tells us that the infant is not the child of the Devil, but the child of God, the member of Christ, the heir of immortality. Sin, then, is a voluntary action. If you close your ear to the voice of God, if there be transgression of an inward law, if you sacrifice the heart and intellect to the senses, if you let ease or comfort be more dear to you than inward purity, if you leave duties undone, and give the body rule over the spirit,—then you sin; for these are voluntary acts, these are wicked works.

The result of this is twofold. The first step is simply the step of alienation. There is a difference between alienation and hostility: in alienation we feel that God is our enemy; in hostility we look on ourselves as enemies to God. Alienation—"you that were something alienated"—was a more forcible expression in the apostle's time than it can be

to us now. In our modern political society, the alien is almost on a level with the citizen. The difference now is almost nothing; in those days it was very great. The alien from the Jewish commonwealth had no right to worship with the Jews, and he had no power to share in the religious advantages of the Jews. The strength of the feeling that was existing against the alien you will perceive in that proverbial expression quoted by the Redeemer, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the *dogs*." In the Roman commonwealth, the word had a meaning almost stronger than this. To be an alien from the Roman commonwealth was to be separated from the authority and protection of the Roman law, and to be subjected to a more severe and degrading kind of penalty than that to which the Roman citizen was subject. The lash that might scourge the back of the alien offender might not fall on the back of a Roman citizen; and this it was that caused the magistrates of Philippi to tremble before their prisoners when the Apostle Paul said, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned, being Romans." The lash was the alien's portion.

On reference to the second chapter of the Ephesians we find a conception given of alienation in the twelfth verse, where the apostle, speaking of the Ephesian converts, says, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." This, brethren, is alienation, exclusion,—to have no place in this world, to be without lot or portion in the universe, to feel God as your enemy, to be estranged from Him, and banished from His presence: for the law of God acts as its own executioner within our bosoms, and there is no defying its sentence; from it there can be no appeal.

My Christian brethren,—hell is not merely a thing hereafter, hell is a thing here; hell is not a thing banished to the far distance, it is ubiquitous as conscience. Wherever there is a worm of undying remorse, the sense of having done wrong, and a feeling of degradation, there is hell

begun. And now respecting this. These words, "banishment from God," "alienation," though merely popular phrases, are expressions of a deep truth,—it is true they are *but* popular expressions, for God is not wrath. You are not absolutely banished from God's Presence. The Immutable changes not. He does not become angry or passionate whenever one of the eight hundred million inhabitants of this world commits a sin. And yet you will observe there is no other way in which we can express the truth but in these popular words. Take the illustration furnished to us last Sunday: it may be that it is the cloud and the mist that obscure the sun from us: the sun is not changed in consequence: it is a change in our atmosphere. But if the philosopher says to you, the sun in its splendour remains the same in the infinite space above, it is only an optical delusion which makes it appear lurid: to what purpose is that difference to you? to you it is lurid, to you it is dark. If you feel a darkness in your eye, coldness in your flesh, to what purpose, so far as feeling is concerned, is it that philosophy tells you the sun remains unchanged? And if it be that God in the heaven above remains Love still, and that Love warms not your heart, and that God is Light, in whom is no darkness at all—yet He shines not in your heart: my Christian brethren, let metaphysics and philosophy say what they will, these popular expressions are the true ones after all; to you God *is* angry, from God you *are* banished, God's countenance *is* alienated from you.

The second step of this estrangement reaches a higher degree still; it is not merely that God is angry, but that we have become enemies to God. The illustration of the process of this we have seen in our common every-day life.

It is sometimes the case that strength of attachment settles down to mere indifference, even changes to hatred. The first quarrel between friends is a thing greatly to be dreaded; it is often followed by the cessation of all correspondence, the interruption of that intercourse which has gone on so long. Well, a secret sense of self-blame and of

wrong will intrude, and the only way in which we can escape it is by throwing the blame elsewhere. You see by degrees a cankered spot begins, and you look at it and touch it, and irritate it until the mortification becomes entire, and that which was at first alienation settles down into absolute animosity. And such is it in the history of the alienation of the soul from God. The first step is to become indifferent, communion is interrupted, irregularity is begun, sin by degrees widens the breach, and then between the soul and God there is a great gulf fixed. Observe by what different ways different classes of character arrive at that. Weak characters have one way, and strong and bold characters have another. The weak mind throws the blame on circumstances; unable itself to subdue its own passions, it imagines there is some law in the universe that so ordains it; insists that the blame is on circumstances and destiny, and says, "If I am thus it is not my fault; if I am not to gratify my passions, why were they given to me? 'Why doth He find fault, for who hath resisted His will?'" And so these weak ones become by degrees fatalists; and it would seem, by their language, as if they were rather the patient victims of a cruel fate, the blame belonging not to them, but to God.

The way in which stronger and more vicious characters arrive at this enmity is different. Humiliation degrades, and degradation produces anger; you have but to go into the narrow and crowded streets of the most degraded portions of our metropolis, and there you will see the outcast turning with a look of defiance and hatred on respectability, merely because it is respectable: and this, brethren, many of us have seen, some of us have felt, in our relation towards God. That terrible demon voice stirs up within us, "curse God and die." Haunted by furies we stand, as it were, at bay, and dare to bid defiance to our Maker. Nothing so proves the original majesty of man as this terrible fact, that the creature can bid defiance to the Creator, and that man has it in him to become the enemy of God.

We pass on, in the next place, to consider the doctrine of reconciliation. We need scarcely define what is meant by

reconciliation. To reconcile is to produce harmony where there was discord, unity where before there was variance. We accept the apostle's definition of reconciliation. He says that "Christ hath made of twain one new man so making peace." Now the reconciliation produced by Christ's Atonement is fourfold :—

In the first place, Christ hath reconciled man to God.

In the second place, He hath reconciled man to man.

In the third place, He hath reconciled man to himself.

And in the fourth place, He hath reconciled man to duty.

In the first place, the Atonement of the Redeemer has reconciled man to God, and that by a twofold step: by exhibiting the character of God; and by that exhibition changing the character of man.

Brethren, the Sacrifice of Christ was the Voice of God proclaiming Love. In this passage the apostle tells us that "Christ has reconciled us to God in the body of His flesh through death." We will not attempt to define what that Sacrifice was—we will not philosophize upon it; for the more we philosophize the less we shall understand it. We are well content to take it as the highest exhibition and the noblest specimen of the law of our Humanity—that great law—that there is no true blessedness without suffering, that every blessing we have comes through vicarious suffering. All that we have and enjoy comes from others' suffering. The life we enjoy is the result of maternal agony; our very bread is only obtained after the toil and anguish of suffering myriads; there is not one atom of the knowledge we possess now which has not, in some century of the world or other, been wrung out of nature's secrets by the sweat of the brow or the sweat of the heart. The very peace which we are enjoying at this present day, how has that been purchased? By the blood of heroes whose bodies are now lying mouldering in the trenches of a thousand battle-fields.

This is the law of our Humanity, and to this our Redeemer became subject—the law of life, self-surrender, without which Reconciliation was impossible. And when the mind has comprehended this, that the Sacrifice of Christ was the mani-

festation of the Love of God, then comes the happy and blessed feeling of reconciliation. When a man has surrendered himself in humbleness and penitence to God, and the proud spirit of self-excuse has passed away: when the soul has opened itself to all His influences and known their power: when the saddest and bitterest part of suffering is felt no longer as the wrath of the Judge but as the discipline of a Father: when the Love of God has melted the soul, and fused it into charity: then the soul is reconciled to God, and God is reconciled to the soul: for it is a marvellous thing how the change of feelings within us changes God, or rather those circumstances and things by which God becomes visible to us. His universe, once so dark, becomes bright: life, once a mere dull, dreary thing "dry as summer dust," springs up once more into fresh luxuriance, and we feel it to be a divine and blessed thing. We hear the voice of God as it was once heard in the garden of Eden whispering among the leaves: every sound, once so discordant, becomes music, the anthem of creation raised up, as it were, with everlasting hallelujahs to the eternal throne. Then it is that a man first knows his immortality, and the soul knows what is meant by infinitude and eternity; not that infinitude which can be measured by miles, nor that eternity which can be computed by hours; but the eternity of emotion. Let a man breathe but one hour of the charity of God, and feel but one true emotion of the reconciled heart, and then he knows for ever what is meant by immortality, and he can understand the reality of his own.

The second consequence of the Redeemer's Atonement is the reconciliation of man to man. Of all the apostles none have perceived so strongly as St. Paul that the death of Christ is the reconciliation of man to man. Take that one single expression in the Epistle to the Ephesians—"For he is our peace who hath made both one." Observe, I pray you, the imagery with which he continues, "and hath broken down the middle wall of partition." The veil or partition wall between the court of the Jew and

Gentile was broken asunder at the crucifixion. St. Paul saw in the death of Christ a spiritual resemblance to that physical phenomenon. Christ was not only born of woman, but under the law; and He could not become as such, the Saviour of the world; but when death had taken place, and He was no longer the Jew but the Man, no longer bound by limitations of time, and place, and country, then He became, as it were, a Spirit in the universe, no longer narrowed to place and to century, but universal, the Saviour of the Gentile as well as the Messiah of the Jew.

Therefore it was that St. Paul called the flesh of Christ a veil, and said the death of Christ was the taking down of "the middle wall of partition" between Jew and Gentile: and therefore it is by the Sacrifice of Christ, and by that alone, man can be thus reconciled to man: and on no other possible basis can there be a brotherhood of the human race. You may try other ways; the men of the world have tried, and doubtless will go on trying, until they find that there is no other way than this. They may try by the principle of selfishness, the principle of moral rule, or the principle of civil authority. Let the political economist come forward with his principle of selfishness, and tell us that this is that by which alone the wealth of nations can accrue. He may get a nation in which there are a wealthy few and miserable many, but not a brotherhood of Christians. Suppose you *say*, men should love one another. Will that *make* them love one another? You may come forward with the crushing rule of political authority. Papal Rome has tried it and failed. She bound up the masses of the human race as a gigantic iceberg; but she could give only a temporary principle of unity and cohesion.

Therefore we turn back once more to the Cross of Christ: through this alone we learn there is one God, one Father, one Baptism, one Elder Brother in whom all can be brothers. But there is a something besides, a deeper principle still. We are told in this passage we can be reconciled to man by the body of Christ through death. And now, brethren, let us understand this. By the Cross of Christ

the apostle meant reconciled by the Spirit of the Cross. And what was that spirit? It was the spirit of giving, and of suffering, and of loving, because He had suffered. Say what we will, love is not gratitude for favours which have been received. Why is the child more beloved by the parent than the parent by the child? Why did the Redeemer love His disciples more than they loved their Master? Benefits will not bind the affection; you must not expect that they will. You must suffer if you would love; you must remember that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." The Apostle Paul felt this when he said reconciliation was produced through the body of the flesh of Christ by death.

Once more man becomes by the Redeemer's Atonement reconciled to himself.

That self-reconciliation is necessary, because we do not readily forgive ourselves. God may have forgiven us, but we cannot forgive ourselves. You may obtain a remission of the past, but you cannot forgive yourself and get back the feeling of self-respect, unity within, rest, by sitting still and believing that God has forgiven you, and that you have nothing left to look for? My brethren, there is a spirit of self-torture within us which is but a perversion of nobleness, a mistake of the true principle. When you have done wrong you want to suffer. Love demands a sacrifice, and only by sacrifice can it reconcile itself to self. Then it is that the Sacrifice of Christ replies to this, answers it, satisfies it, and makes it plain. The Sacrifice of Christ was suffering in Love, it was surrender to the Will of God. The Apostle Paul felt this; when that Spirit was with him he was reconciled to himself. He says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." If ever you devoted yourself to another's happiness or amelioration, so far and so long as you were doing that, you forgave yourself; you felt the spirit of inward self-reconciliation, and what we want is only to make that perpetual, to make that binding which we do by fits and starts, to feel ourselves a living sacrifice, to know that we are, in our highest and

best state, victims, offered up in love on the great altar of the kingdom of Christ, offered by Him to God as the first-fruits of His Sacrifice; then we are reconciled to ourselves "by the body of His flesh through death."

And, lastly, through the Atonement of the Redeemer, man becomes reconciled to duty. There is no discord more terrible than that between man and duty. There are few of us who fancy we have found our own places in this world; our lives, our partnerships, our professions, and our trades, are not those which we should have chosen for ourselves. There is an ambition within us which sometimes makes us fancy we are fit for higher things, that we are adapted for other and better things than those to which we are called. But we turn again to the Cross of Christ, and the mystery of Life becomes plain. The Life and Death of Christ are the reconciliation of man to the duties which he has to do. You cannot study His marvellous Life without perceiving that the whole of Its details are uncongenial, mean, trivial, wretched circumstances—from which the spirit of a man revolts.

To bear the sneer of the Sadducee and the curse of the Pharisee; to be rejected by His family and friends; to be harassed by the petty disputes and miserable quarrels of His followers about their own *personal* precedence; to be treated by the government of His country as a charlatan and a demagogue; to be surrounded by a crowd of men, coming and going without sympathy; to retire and find His leisure intruded on and Himself pursued for ignoble ends—these were the circumstances of the Redeemer's existence here. Yet in these it was that the noblest Life the world has ever seen was lived. He retired into the wilderness, and one by one put down all those visions that would have seduced Him from the higher path of duty; the vision of comfort which tempted Him to change the stones of this world into bread; the vision of ambition which tempted Him to make the kingdoms of this world His own by seeking good through evil; the vision which tempted Him to distrust God, and become important by pursuing some strange, unauthorized

way of His own, instead of following the way of submission to the will of God.

He ascended into the Transfiguration Mount, and there His spirit converses with those of an elder dispensation, who had fought the fight before Him, Moses and Elias, and they spoke to Him of the triumph which He had to accomplish in death at Jerusalem. And He went down again with calm, serene, and transfigured faith, and there, at the very foot of the Mount, He found His disciples engaged in some miserable squabble with the scribes and the Pharisees about casting out a devil. And this Life of His is the only interpretation of this life of ours—the reconciliation of our hearts with what we have to do. It is not by change of circumstances, but by fitting our spirits to the circumstances in which God has placed us, that we can be reconciled to Life and Duty. If the duties before us be not noble, let us ennoble them by doing them in a noble spirit; we become reconciled to Life if we live in the spirit of Him who reconciled the Life of God with the lowly duties of servants.

And now one word in conclusion. The central doctrine of Christianity is the Atonement. Take that away, and you obliterate Christianity. If Christianity were merely the imitation of Christ, why then the imitation of any other good man, the Apostle Paul or John, might become a kind of Christianity. If Christianity were merely martyrdom for truth, then, with the exception of a certain amount of degree, I see no difference between the death of Socrates and the death of Jesus Christ. But Christianity is more than this. It is the At-one-ment of the Soul. It is a reconciliation which the Life and Death of Christ have wrought out for this world,—the reconciliation of man to God, the reconciliation of man to man, the reconciliation of man to self, and the reconciliation of man to duty.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT

1 CORINTHIANS xii. 4.—"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

ACCORDING to a view which contains in it a profound truth, the ages of the world are divisible into three dispensations, presided over by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

In the dispensation of the Father, God was known as a Creator; creation manifested His eternal power and Godhead, and the religion of mankind was the religion of Nature.

In the dispensation of the Son, God manifested Himself to humanity through man; the Eternal Word spoke, through the inspired and gifted of the human race, to those that were uninspired and ungifted. This was the dispensation of the prophets—its climax was the advent of the Redeemer; it was completed when *perfect* Humanity manifested God to man. The characteristic of this dispensation was, that God revealed Himself by an authoritative Voice, speaking from without, and the highest manifestation of God whereof man was capable, was a Divine Humanity.

The age in which we at present live is the dispensation of the Spirit, in which God has communicated Himself by the highest revelation, and in the most intimate communion, of which man is capable; no longer through creation, no more as an authoritative Voice from without, but as a Law within—as a Spirit mingling with a spirit. This is the dispensation of which the prophet said of old, that the time should come when they should no longer teach every man his brother and every man his neighbour, saying, "Know the Lord"—that is, by a will revealed by external authority from other human minds—"for they shall all know Him, from the least of them to the greatest." This is the dispensation, too, of whose close the Apostle Paul speaks

thus: "Then shall the Son also be subject to Him that hath put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."

The outward humanity is to disappear, that the inward union may be complete. To the same effect, he speaks in another place, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more." For this reason, the Ascension was necessary before Pentecost could come: the Spirit was not given, we are told, because Jesus was not yet glorified. It was necessary for the Son to disappear as an outward authority, in order that he might re-appear as an inward principle of life. Our salvation is no longer God manifested in a Christ *without* us, but as a Christ *within* us, the hope of glory. To-day is the selected anniversary of that memorable day, when the first proof was given to the senses, in the gift of Pentecost, that that spiritual dispensation had begun.

There is a twofold way in which the operations of the Spirit on mankind may be considered—His influence on the Church as a whole, and His influence on individuals; both of these are brought together in the text. It branches, therefore, into a twofold division.

I. Spiritual gifts conferred on individuals.
II. Spiritual union of the Church.

Let us distinguish between the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit: by the Spirit, the apostle meant the vital principle of new life from God, common to all believers—the animating Spirit of the Church of God; by the gifts, he meant the diversities of form in which He operates on individuals; its influence varied according to their respective peculiarities and characteristics. In the twenty-eighth verse of this chapter a full catalogue of gifts is found; looking at them generally, we discover two classes into which they may be divided—the first are natural, the second are supernatural: the first are those capacities which are originally found in human nature—personal endowments of mind, a character elevated and enlarged by the gift of the Spirit; the second

are those which were created and called into existence by the sudden approach of the same Influence.

Just as if the temperature of this Northern hemisphere were raised suddenly, and a mighty tropical river were to pour its fertilizing inundation over the country, the result would be the impartation of a vigorous and gigantic growth to the vegetation already in existence, and at the same time the development of life in seeds and germs which had long lain latent in the soil, incapable of vegetation in the unkindly climate of their birth. Exactly in the same way, the flood of a Divine life, poured suddenly into the souls of men, enlarged and ennobled qualities which had been used already, and at the same time *developed* powers which never could have become apparent in the cold, low temperature of natural life.

Among the natural gifts, we may instance these: teaching —healing—the power of government. Teaching is a gift, natural or acquired. To know, is one thing; to have the capacity of imparting knowledge, is another.

The physician's art again is no supernatural mystery; long and careful study of physical laws capacitate him for his task. To govern, again, is a natural faculty; it may be acquired by habit, but there are some who never could acquire it. Some men seem born to command: place them in what sphere you will, others acknowledge their secret influence, and subordinate themselves to their will. The faculty of organization, the secret of rule, need no supernatural power. They exist among the uninspired. Now the doctrine of the apostle was, that all these are transformed and renovated by the spirit of a new life in such a way as to become almost new powers, or as he calls them, gifts of the Spirit. A remarkable illustration of this is his view of the human body. If there be anything common to us by nature, it is the members of our corporeal frame; yet the apostle taught that these, guided by the Spirit as its instruments and obeying a holy will, became transfigured; so that, in his language, the body becomes a temple of the Holy Ghost, and the meanest faculties, the lowest appetites,

the humblest organs, are ennobled by the Spirit mind which guides them. Thus he bids the Romans yield themselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

The second class of gifts are supernatural: of these we find two pre-eminent—the gift of tongues, and the gift of prophecy.

It does not appear that the gift of tongues was merely the imparted faculty of speaking foreign languages—it could not be that the highest gift of God to His Church merely made them rivals of the linguist; it would rather seem that the Spirit of God, mingling with the soul of man, supernaturally elevated its aspirations and glorified its conceptions, so that an entranced state of ecstasy was produced, and feelings called into energy, for the expression of which the ordinary forms of speech were found inadequate. Even in a far lower department, when a man becomes possessed of ideas for which his ordinary vocabulary supplies no sufficient expression, his language becomes broken, incoherent, struggling, and almost unnaturally elevated; much more was it to be expected that when divine and new feelings rushed like a flood upon the soul, the language of men would have become strange and extraordinary; but in that supposed case, wild as the expressions might appear to one coldly looking on and not participating in the feelings of the speaker, they would be quite sufficient to convey intelligible meaning to any one affected by the same emotions.

Where perfect sympathy exists, incoherent utterance—a word—a syllable—is quite as efficient as elaborate sentences. Now this is precisely the account given of the phenomenon which attended the gift of tongues. On the day of Pentecost, all who were in the same state of spiritual emotion as those who spoke, understood the speakers; each was as intelligible to all as if he spoke in their several tongues: to those who were coolly and sceptically watching, the effects appeared like those of intoxication. A similar account is given by the Apostle Paul: the voice appeared to unsympathetic ears as that of a barbarian; the uninitiated and unbelieving, coming

in, heard nothing that was articulate to them, but only what seemed to them the ravings of insanity.

The next was the gift of prophecy. Prophecy has several meanings in Scripture; sometimes it means the power of predicting future events, sometimes an entranced state accompanied with ravings, sometimes it appears to mean only exposition; but prophecy, as the miraculous spiritual gift granted to the early Church, seems to have been a state of communion with the mind of God lower than that which was called the gift of tongues, at least less ecstatic, less rapt into the world to come, more under the guidance of the reason, more within the control of calm consciousness—as we might say, less supernatural.

Upon these gifts we make two observations:

1. Even the highest were not accompanied with spiritual faultlessness. Inspiration was one thing, infallibility another. The gifts of the Spirit were, like the gifts of nature, subordinated to the will—capable of being used for good or evil, sometimes pure, sometimes mixed with human infirmity. The supernaturally gifted man was no mere machine, no automaton ruled in spite of himself by a superior spirit. Disorder, vanity, overweening self-estimation, might accompany these gifts, and the prophetic utterance itself might be degraded to a mere brawling in the Church; therefore St. Paul established laws of control, declared the need of subjection and rule over spiritual gifts: the spirits of the prophets were to be subject to the prophets; if those in the ecstatic state were tempted to break out into utterance and unable to interpret what it meant, those so gifted were to hold their peace.

The prophet poured out the truths supernaturally imparted to his highest spirit, in an inspired and impassioned eloquence which was intelligible even to the unspiritual, and was one of the appointed means of convincing the unconverted. The lesson derivable from this is not obsolete even in the present day. There is nothing perhaps precisely identical in our own day with those gifts of the early Church; but genius and talent are uncommon gifts,

which stand in a somewhat analogous relation—in a closer one certainly—than more ordinary endowments. The flights of genius, we know, appear like maniac ravings to minds not elevated to the same spiritual level. Now these are perfectly compatible with mis-use, abuse, and moral disorder. The most gifted of our countrymen has left this behind him as his epitaph, "The greatest, wisest, *meanest* of mankind." The most glorious gift of poetic insight—itself in a way divine—having something akin to Deity—is too often associated with degraded life and vicious character. Those gifts which elevate us above the rest of our species, whereby we stand aloof and separate from the crowd, convey no moral—nor even mental—infallibility: nay, they have in themselves a peculiar danger, whereas that gift which is common to us all as brethren, the animating spirit of a divine life, in whose soil the spiritual being of all is rooted, cannot make us vain; we *cannot* pride ourselves on *that*, for it is common to us all.

2. Again, the gifts which were higher in one sense were lower in another; as supernatural gifts they would rank thus—the gift of tongues before prophecy, and prophecy before teaching; but as blessings to be desired, this order is reversed: rather than the gift of tongues St. Paul bids the Corinthians desire that they might prophecy. Inferior again to prophecy was the quite simple, and as we should say, lower faculty of explaining truth. Now the principle upon which that was tried was that of utility—not utility in the low sense of the utilitarian, who measures the value of a thing by its susceptibility of application to the purpose of this present life, but a utility whose measure was love, charity. The apostle considered *that* gift most desirable by which men might most edify one another. And hence that noble declaration of one of the most gifted of mankind—"I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

Our estimate is almost the reverse of this: we value a gift in proportion to its rarity, its distinctive character,

separating its possessor from the rest of his fellow-men; whereas, in truth, those gifts which leave us in lonely majesty apart from our species, useless to them, benefiting ourselves alone, are not the most godlike, but the least so; because they are dissevered from that beneficent charity which is the very being of God. Your lofty incommunicable thoughts, your ecstasies, and inspirations, and contemplative raptures—in virtue of which you have estimated yourself as the porcelain of the earth, of another nature altogether than the clay of common spirits—tried by the test of Charity, what is there grand in these if they cannot be applied as blessings to those that are beneath you? One of our countrymen has achieved for himself extraordinary scientific renown; he pierced the mysteries of nature, he analysed her processes, he gave new elements to the world. The same man applied his rare intellect to the construction of a simple and very common instrument—that well-known lamp which has been the guardian of the miner's life from the explosion of fire. His discoveries are his nobility in this world, his trifling invention gives him rank in the world to come. By the former he shines as one of the brightest luminaries in the firmament of science, by the latter evincing a spirit animated and directed by Christian love, he takes his place as one of the Church of God. And such is ever the true order of rank which graces occupy in reference to gifts. The most trifling act which is marked by usefulness to others is nobler in God's sight, than the most brilliant accomplishment of genius. To teach a few Sunday-school children, week after week, commonplace simple truths—persevering in spite of dulness and mean capacities—is a more glorious occupation than the highest meditations or creations of genius which edify or instruct only our own solitary soul.

II. The spiritual unity of the Church—"the same Spirit."

Men have formed to themselves two ideas of unity: the first is a sameness of form—of expression; the second

an identity of spirit. Some of the best of mankind have fondly hoped to realize a unity for the Church of Christ which should be manifested by uniform expressions in everything: their imaginations have loved to paint, as the ideal of a Christian Church, a state in which the same liturgy should be used throughout the world, the same ecclesiastical government, even the same vestments, the same canonical hours, the same form of architecture. They could conceive nothing more entirely one than a Church so constituted that the same prayers, in the very same expressions, at the very same moment, should be ascending to the Eternal Ear. There are others who have thrown aside entirely this idea as chimerical; who have not only ceased to hope it, but even to wish it; who if it could be realized, would consider it a matter of regret; who feel that the minds of men are various—their modes and habits of thought, their original capacities and acquired associations, infinitely diverse; and who, perceiving that the law of the universal system is manifoldness in unity, have ceased to expect any other oneness for the Church of Christ than that of a sameness of spirit, showing itself through diversities of gifts. Among these last was the Apostle Paul: his large and glorious mind rejoiced in the contemplation of the countless manifestations of spiritual nature beneath which he detected one and the same pervading Mind. Now let us look at this matter somewhat more closely.

1. All real unity is manifold. Feelings in themselves identical find countless forms of expression: for instance, sorrow is the same feeling throughout the human race; but the Oriental prostrates himself upon the ground, throws dust upon his head, tears his garments, is not ashamed to break out into the most violent lamentations. In the north, we rule our grief in public; suffer not even a quiver to be seen upon the lip or brow, and consider calmness as the appropriate expression of manly grief. Nay, two sisters of different temperament will show their grief diversely; one will love to dwell upon the theme of the qualities of the

departed, the other feels it a sacred sorrow, on which the lips are sealed for ever; yet would it not be idle to ask which of them has the truest affection? Are they not both in their own way true? In the same East, men take off their sandals in devotion; we exactly reverse the procedure, and uncover the head. The Oriental prostrates himself in the dust before his sovereign; even before his God the Briton only kneels; yet would it not again be idle to ask which is the essential and proper form of reverence? Is not true reverence in all cases modified by the individualities of temperament and education? Should we not say, in all these forms worketh one and the same spirit of reverence? Again in the world as God has made it, one law shows itself under diverse, even opposite manifestations; lead sinks in water, wood floats upon the surface. In former times men assigned these different results to different forces, laws, and gods. A knowledge of nature has demonstrated that they are expressions of one and the same law; and the great difference between the educated and the uneducated man is this—the uneducated sees in this world nothing but an infinite collection of unconnected facts—a broken, distorted, and fragmentary system, which his mind can by no means reduce to order. The educated man, in proportion to his education, sees the number of laws diminished—beholds in the manifold appearances of nature the expression of a few laws, by degrees fewer, till at last it becomes possible to his conception that they are all reducible to one, and that that which lies beneath the innumerable phenomena of nature is the same Spirit—God.

2. All *living* unity is spiritual, not formal; not sameness, but manifoldness. You may have a unity shown in identity of form; but it is a lifeless unity. There is a sameness on the sea-beach—that unity which the ocean waves have produced by curling and forcibly destroying the angularities of individual form, so that every stone presents the same monotony of aspect, and you must fracture each again in order to distinguish whether you hold in your hand a mass

of flint or fragment of basalt. There is no life in unity such as this.

But as soon as you arrive at a unity that is living, the form becomes more complex, and you search in vain for uniformity. In the parts, it must be found, if found at all, in the sameness of the pervading life. The illustration given by the apostle is that of the human body—a higher unity, he says, by being composed of many members, than if every member were but a repetition of a single type. It is conceivable that God might have moulded such a form for human life; it is conceivable that every cause, instead of producing in different nerves a variety of sensations, should have affected every one in a mode precisely similar; that instead of producing a sensation of sound—a sensation of colour—a sensation of taste—the outward causes of nature, be they what they may, should have given but one unvaried feeling to every sense, and that the whole universe should have been light or sound.

That would have been unity, if sameness be unity; but, says the apostle, if the whole body were seeing, where were the hearing? That uniformity would have been irreparable loss—the loss of every part that was merged into the one. What is the body's unity? Is it not this? The unity of a living consciousness which marvellously animates every separate atom of the frame, and reduces each to the performance of a function fitted to the welfare of the whole—its own, not another's: so that the inner spirit can say of the remotest, and in form most unlike, member, "That, too, is myself."

3. None but a spiritual unity can preserve the rights both of the individual and the Church. All other systems of unity, except the apostolic, either sacrifice the Church to the individual, or the individual to the Church.

Some have claimed the right of private judgment in such a way that every individual opinion becomes truth, and every utterance of private conscience right: thus the Church is sacrificed to the individual; and the universal conscience, the common faith becomes as nothing; the spirits of the

prophets are not subject to the prophets. Again, there are others, who, like the Church of Rome, would surrender the conscience of each man to the conscience of the Church, and coerce the particulars of faith into exact coincidence with a formal creed. Spiritual unity saves the right of both in God's system. The Church exists for the individual, just as truly as the individual for the Church. The Church is then most perfect when all its powers converge, and are concentrated on the formation and protection of individual character; and the individual is then most complete—that is, most a Christian—when he has practically learned that his life is not his own, but owed to others—"that no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself." Now, spiritual unity respects the sanctity of the individual conscience. How reverently the Apostle Paul considered its claims, and how tenderly! When once it became a matter of conscience, this was his principle laid down in matters of dispute: "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." The belief of the whole world cannot make that thing true to me which to me seems false. The conscience of the whole world cannot make a thing right to me, if I, in my heart, believe it wrong. You may coerce the conscience, you may control men's belief, and you may produce a unity by so doing; but it is the unity of pebbles on the seashore—a lifeless identity of outward form with no cohesion between the parts—a dead sea-beach on which nothing grows, and where the very seaweed dies.

Lastly, it respected the sanctity of individual character. Out of eight hundred millions of the human race, a few features diversify themselves into so many forms of countenance, that scarcely two could be mistaken for each other. There are no two leaves on the same tree alike; nor two sides of the same leaf, unless you cut and kill it. There is a sacredness in individuality of character; each one born into this world is a fresh new soul intended by his Maker to develop himself in a new fresh way; we are what we are; we cannot be truly other than ourselves. We reach

perfection not by copying, much less by aiming at originality; but by consistently and steadily working out the life which is common to us all, according to the character which God has given us. And thus will the Church of God be one at last—will present an unity like that of heaven. There is one universe in which each separate star differs from another in glory; one Church in which a single Spirit, the life of God, pervades each separate soul; and just in proportion as that life becomes exalted does it enable every one to shine forth in the distinctness of his own separate individuality, like the stars of heaven.

INSPIRATION

ROMANS xv. 1–4.—"We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.—Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.—For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.—For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

WE will endeavour, brethren, to search the connection between the different parts of these verses.

First, the apostle lays down a Christian's duty—"Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification." After that he brings forward as the sanction of that duty, the spirit of the Life of Christ—"For even Christ pleased not Himself." Next, he adds an illustration of that principle by a quotation from Psalm lxix. :—"It is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on Me." Lastly, he explains and defends that application of the psalm, as if he had said, "I am perfectly justified in

applying that passage to Christ, for 'whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.'"

So that in this quotation, and the defence of it as contained in these verses, we have the principle of Apostolical interpretation; we have the principle upon which the apostles used the Old Testament Scriptures, and we are enabled to understand their view of inspiration. This is one of the most important considerations upon which we can be at this moment engaged. It is the deepest question of our day; the one which lies beneath all others, and in comparison of which the questions just now agitating the popular mind—whether of Papal jurisdiction or varieties of Church doctrine in our own communion—are but superficial: it is this grand question of Inspiration which is given to this age to solve.

Our subject will break itself up into questions such as these—What the Bible is, and what the Bible is not? What is meant by inspiration? Whether inspiration is the same thing as infallibility? When God inspired the minds, did He dictate the words? Does the inspiration of men mean the infallibility of their words? Is inspiration the same as dictation? Whether, granting that we have the Word of God, we have also the words of God? Are the operations of the Holy Spirit inspiring men, compatible with partial error, as His operations in sanctifying them are compatible with partial evil? How are we to interpret and apply the Scriptures? Is Scripture, as the Romanists say, so unintelligible and obscure that we cannot understand it without having the guidance of an infallible Church? Or is it, as some fanciful Protestants will tell us, a book upon which all ingenuity may be used to find Christ in every sentence? Upon these things there are many views, some of them false, some superstitious; but it is not our business now to deal with these; our way is rather to teach positively than negatively: we will try to set up the truth, and error may fall before it.

The Collect for this day leads us to the special consideration of Holy Scripture; we shall therefore take this for our

subject, and endeavour to understand what was the Apostolical principle of Interpretation.

In the text we find two principles: first, that Scripture is of universal application;

And second, that all the lines of Scripture converge towards Jesus Christ.

First, then, there is here an universal application of Scripture. This passage quoted by the apostle is from the sixty-ninth Psalm. That was evidently spoken by David of himself. From first to last, no unprejudiced mind can detect a conception in the writer's mind of an application to Christ, or to any other person after him; the psalmist is there full of himself and his own sorrows. It is a natural and touching exposition of human grief and a good man's trust. Nevertheless, you will observe that St. Paul extends the use of these words, and applies them to Jesus Christ. Nay, more than that, he uses them as belonging to all Christians; for, he says, "whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning." Now this principle will be more evident if we state it in the words of Scripture, "Knowing that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation:" those holy men spake not their own limited individual feelings, but as feeling that they were inspired by the Spirit of God. Their words belonged to the whole of our common Humanity. No prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation. Bear in mind that the word prophecy does not mean what we now understand by it—merely prediction of future events—in the Scriptures it signifies inspired teaching. The teaching of the prophets was by no means always prediction. Bearing this in mind, let us remember that the apostle says it is of no private interpretation. Had the Psalm applied only to David, then it would have been of private interpretation—it would have been special, limited, particular; it would have belonged to an individual; instead of which, it belongs to Humanity. Take again the subject of which we spoke last Sunday—the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. Manifestly that was spoken originally at Jerusalem; in a manner it seemed

limited to Jerusalem, for its very name was mentioned; and besides, as we read this morning, our Saviour says, "This generation shall not pass until all be fulfilled."

But had the prophecy ended there, then you would still have had prophecy, but it would have been of private—that is, peculiar, limited—interpretation; whereas our Redeemer's principle was this: that this doom pronounced on Jerusalem was universally applicable, that it was but a style and specimen of God's judgments. The judgment coming of the Son of Man takes place wherever there is evil grown ripe, whenever corruption is complete. And the gathering of the Roman eagles is but a specimen of the way in which judgment at last overtakes every city, every country, and every man in whom evil has reached the point where there is no possibility of cure.

So that the prophecy belongs to all ages, from the destruction of Jerusalem to the end of the world. The words of St. Matthew are universally applicable. For Scripture deals with principles; not with individuals, but rather with states of humanity. Promises and threatenings are made to individuals, because they are in a particular state of character; but they belong to all who are in that state, for "God is no respecter of persons."

First, we will take an instance of the state of blessing.

There was blessing pronounced to Abraham, in which it will be seen how large a grasp on Humanity this view of Scripture gave to St. Paul. The whole argument in the Epistle to the Romans is, that the promises made to Abraham were not to his person, but to his faith; and thus the apostle says, "They who are of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham."

We will now take the case of curse or threatening. Jonah, by Divine command, went through Nineveh, proclaiming its destruction; but that prophecy belonged to the state in which Nineveh was; it was true only while it remained in that state; and therefore, as they repented, and their state was thus changed, the prophecy was left unfulfilled. From this we perceive the largeness and

grandeur of Scripture interpretation. In the Epistle to the Corinthians, we find the apostle telling of the state of the Jews in their passage towards the Promised Land, their state of idolatry and gluttony, and then he proceeds to pronounce the judgments that fell upon them, adding that he tells us this not merely as a matter of history, but rather as an illustration of a principle. They are specimens of eternal, unalterable Law. So that whosoever shall be in the state of these Jews, whosoever shall imitate them, the same judgments must fall upon them, the same satiety and weariness, the same creeping of the inward serpent polluting all their feelings; and therefore he says, "All these things happened unto them for ensamples." Again he uses the same principle, not as a private, but a general application; for, he says, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man."

We will take now another case, applied not to nations, but to individuals. In Hebrews xiii, we find these words from the Old Testament, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" and there the apostle's inference is that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what men shall do unto me." Now, when we refer to Scripture, we shall find that this was a promise originally made to Jacob. The apostle does not hesitate to take that promise and appropriate it to all Christians; for it was made, not to Jacob as a person, but to the state in which Jacob was; it was made to all who, like Jacob, are wanderers and pilgrims in the world; it was made to all whom sin has rendered outcasts and who are longing to return. The promises made to the meek belong to Meekness; the promises made to the humble belong to Humility.

And this it is which makes this Bible, not only a blessed Book, but *our* Book. It is this universal applicability of Scripture which has made the influence of the Bible universal: this Book has held spell-bound the hearts of nations, in a way in which no single book has ever held men before. Remember too, in order to enhance the marvellousness of this, that the nation from which it emanated

was a despised people. For the last eighteen hundred years the Jews have been proverbially a by-word and a reproach. But that contempt for Israel is nothing new to the world, for before even the Roman despised them, the Assyrian and Egyptian regarded them with scorn. Yet the words which came from Israel's prophets have been the life-blood of the world's devotions. And the teachers, the psalmists, the prophets, and the lawgivers of this despised nation spoke out truths that have struck the key-note of the heart of man; and this, not because they were of Jewish, but just because they were of universal application.

This collection of books has been to the world what no other book has ever been to a nation. States have been founded on its principles. Kings rule by a compact based on it. Men hold the Bible in their hands when they prepare to give solemn evidence affecting life, death, or property; the sick man is almost afraid to die unless the Book be within reach of his hands; the battle-ship goes into action with one on board whose office is to expound it; its prayers, its psalms are the language which we use when we speak to God; eighteen centuries have found no holier, no diviner language. If ever there has been a prayer or a hymn enshrined in the heart of a nation, you are sure to find its basis in the Bible. There is no new religious idea given to the world, but it is merely the development of something given in the Bible. The very translation of it has fixed language and settled the idioms of speech. Germany and England speak as they speak because the Bible was translated. It has made the most illiterate peasant more familiar with the history, customs, and geography of ancient Palestine than with the localities of his own country. Men who know nothing of the Grampians, of Snowdon, or of Skiddaw, are at home in Zion, the lake of Gennesareth, or among the rills of Carmel. People who know little about London, know by heart the places in Jerusalem where those blessed feet trod which were nailed to the Cross. Men who know nothing of the architecture of a Christian cathedral can yet tell you all about the pattern

of the Holy Temple. Even this shows us the influence of the Bible. The orator holds a thousand men for half an hour breathless—a thousand men as one, listening to his single word. But this Word of God has held a thousand nations for thrice a thousand years spell-bound ; held them by an abiding power, even the universality of its truth ; and we feel it to be no more a collection of books, but *the* Book.

We pass on now to consider the second principle contained in these words, which is, that all Scripture bears towards Jesus Christ. St. Paul quotes these Jewish words as fulfilled in Christ. Jesus of Nazareth is the central point in which all the converging lines of Scripture meet. Again we state this principle in Scripture language : in the book of Revelation we find it written, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," that is, the sum and substance of prophecy ; the very spirit of Scripture is to bear testimony to Jesus Christ. We must often have been surprised and perplexed at the way in which the Apostles quote passages in reference to Christ, which originally had no reference to Him. In our text, for instance, David speaks only of himself, and yet St. Paul refers it to Christ. Let us understand this. We have already said that Scripture deals not with individuals, but with states and principles. Promises belong to persons only so far as they are what they are taken to be ; and consequently all unlimited promises made to individuals so far as they are referred merely to those individuals, are necessarily exaggerated and hyperbolical. They can only be true of One in whom that is fulfilled which was unfulfilled in them.

We will take an instance. We are all familiar with the well-known prophecy of Balaam. We all remember the magnificent destinies he promised to the people whom he was called to curse. Those promises have never been fulfilled, neither from the whole appearance of things does it seem likely that they ever will be fulfilled in their literal sense. To whom, then, are they made ? To Israel ? Yes ; so far as they developed God's own conception. Balaam

says, "God hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." Is this the character of Israel, an idolatrous and rebellious nation? Spoken of the literal Israel, this prophecy is false; but it was not false of that spotlessness and purity of which Israel was the temporal and imperfect type. If one can be found of whom that description is true, of whom we can say the Lord hath not beheld iniquity in him, to him then that prophecy belongs.

Brethren,—Jesus of Nazareth is that pure and spotless One. Christ is perfectly, all that every saint was partially. To Him belongs all: all that description of a perfect character, which would be exaggeration if spoken of others, and to this character the blessing belongs; hence it is that all the fragmentary representations of character collect and centre in Him alone. Therefore, the apostle says, "It was added until the seed should come to whom the promise was made." Consequently St. Paul would not read the Psalm as spoken only of David. Were the lofty aspirations, the purity and humbleness expressed in the text true of him, poor, sinful, erring David? These were the expressions of the Christ within his heart—the longing of the Spirit of God within him; but they were no proper representation of the spirit of his life, for there is a marvellous difference between a man's ideal and his actual—between the man and the book he writes—a difference between the aspirations within the man and the character which is realized by his daily life. The promises are to the Christ within David; therefore they are applied to the Christ when He comes. Now, let us extract from that this application.

Brethren, Scripture is full of Christ. From Genesis to Revelation everything breathes of Him, not every letter of every sentence, but the spirit of every chapter. It is full of Christ, but not in the way that some suppose; for there is nothing more miserable, as specimens of perverted ingenuity, than the attempts of certain commentators and preachers to find remote, and recondite, and intended allusions to Christ everywhere. For example, they chance to find in the construction of the temple the fusion of two metals, and this

they conceive is meant to show the union of Divinity with Humanity in Christ. If they read of coverings to the tabernacle, they find implied the doctrine of imputed righteousness. If it chance that one of the curtains of the tabernacle be red, they see in that a prophecy of the blood of Christ. If they are told that the Kingdom of Heaven is a pearl of great price, they will see in it the allusion—that, as a pearl is the production of animal suffering, so the Kingdom of Heaven is produced by the sufferings of the Redeemer. I mention this perverted mode of comment, because it is not merely harmless, idle, and useless; it is positively dangerous. This is to make the Holy Spirit speak riddles and conundrums, and the interpretation of Scripture but clever riddle-guessing. Putting aside all this childishness, we say that the Bible is full of Christ. Every unfulfilled aspiration of Humanity in the past; all partial representation of perfect character; all sacrifices, nay even those of idolatry, point to the fulfilment of what we want, the answer to every longing—the type of perfect Humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Get the habit—a glorious one—of referring all to Christ. How did He feel?—think?—act? So then must I feel, and think, and act. Observe how Christ was a living reality in St. Paul's mind. "Should I please myself?" "For even Christ pleased not Himself." "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

THE TRINITY

1 THESSALONIANS v. 23.—"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

THE knowledge of God is the blessedness of man. To know God, and to be known by Him—to love God, and to

be loved by Him—is the most precious treasure which this life has to give; properly speaking, the only treasure; properly speaking, the only knowledge; for all knowledge is valuable only so far as it converges towards and ends in the knowledge of God, and enables us to acquaint ourselves with God, and be at peace with Him. The doctrine of the Trinity is the sum of all that knowledge which has as yet been gained by man. I say gained *as yet.* For we presume not to maintain that in the ages which are to come hereafter, our knowledge shall not be superseded by a higher knowledge; we presume not to say that in a state of existence future—yea, even here upon this earth, at that period which is mysteriously referred to in Scripture as "the coming of the Son of Man"—there shall not be given to the soul an intellectual conception of the Almighty, a vision of the Eternal, in comparison with whose brightness and clearness our present knowledge of the Trinity shall be as rudimentary and as childlike as the knowledge of the Jew was in comparison with the knowledge of the Christian.

Now the passage which I have undertaken to expound to-day, is one in which the doctrine of the Trinity is brought into connection practically with the doctrine of our humanity. Before entering into it, brethren, let us lay down these two observations and duties for ourselves. In the first place, let us examine the doctrine of the Trinity ever in the spirit of charity. A clear statement of the deepest doctrine that man can know, and the intellectual conception of that doctrine, are by no means easy. We are puzzled and perplexed by *words;* we fight respecting *words.* Quarrels are nearly always verbal quarrels. Words lose their meaning in the course of time; nay, the very words of the Athanasian creed which we read to-day mean not, in this age, the same thing which they meant in ages past. Therefore it is possible that men, externally Trinitarians, may differ from each other, though using the same words, as greatly as a Unitarian differs from a Trinitarian. There may be found in the same Church and in the same congregation, men holding all possible shades of opinion, though agreeing

externally, and in words. I speak within the limit of my own experience when I say that persons have been known and heard to express the language of bitter condemnation respecting Unitarianism, who when examined and calmly required to draw out verbally the meaning of their own conceptions, have been proved to be holding all the time—unconsciously—the very doctrine of Sabellianism. And this doctrine is condemned by the Church as distinctly as that of Unitarianism. Therefore let us learn from all this a large and catholic charity. There are in almost every congregation, themselves not knowing it, Trinitarians who are practically Tri-theists, worshipping three Gods; and Sabellians, or worshippers of one person under three different manifestations. To know God so that we may be said, intellectually, to appreciate Him, is blessed: to be unable to do so is a misfortune. Be content with your own blessedness, in comparison with others' misfortunes. Do not give to that misfortune the additional sting of illiberal and unchristian vituperation.

The next observation we have to lay down for ourselves is, that we should examine this doctrine in the spirit of modesty. There are those who are inclined to sneer at the Trinitarian; those to whom the doctrine appears merely a contradiction—a puzzle—an entangled, labyrinthine enigma, in which there is no meaning whatever. But let all such remember, that though the doctrine may appear to them absurd, because they have not the proper conception of it, some of the profoundest thinkers, and some of the holiest spirits among mankind, have believed in this doctrine—have clung to it as a matter of life or death. Let them be assured of this, that whether the doctrine be true or false, it is not necessarily a doctrine self-contradictory. Let them be assured of this, in all modesty, that such men never could have held it unless there was latent in the doctrine a deep truth, perchance the truth of God.

We pass on now to the consideration of this verse under the following divisions. In the first place, we shall view it as a triad in discord: "I pray God your whole spirit and

soul and body be preserved blameless;" in the second place, as a Trinity in Unity: "the God of peace sanctify you wholly."

We take then first of all for our consideration the triad in discord: "I pray God your whole body and soul and spirit be preserved blameless."

The apostle here divides human nature into a threefold division; and here we have to observe again the difficulty often experienced in understanding words. Thus words in the Athanasian Creed have become obsolete, or lost their meaning; so that in the present day the words "person," "substance," "procession," "generation," to an ordinary person, mean almost nothing. So this language of the apostle, when rendered into English, shows no difference whatever between "soul" and "spirit." We say, for instance, that the soul of a man has departed from him. We also say that the spirit of a man has departed from him. There is no distinct difference between the two; but in the original two very different kinds of thoughts—two very different modes of conception—are represented by the two English words "soul" and "spirit."

It is our business, therefore, in the first place, to understand what is meant by this threefold division. When the apostle speaks of the body, what he means is the animal life—that which we share in common with beasts, birds, and reptiles; for our life, my Christian brethren—our sensational existence—differs but little from that of the lower animals. There is the same external form, the same material in the blood-vessels, in the nerves, and in the muscular system. Nay, more than that, our appetites and instincts are alike, our lower pleasures like their lower pleasures, our lower pain like their lower pain, our life is supported by the same means, and our animal functions are almost indistinguishably the same.

But once more, the apostle speaks of what he calls the "soul." What the apostle meant by what is translated "soul," is the immortal part of man—the immortal as distinguished from the mortal: those powers, in fact, which man has by nature—powers natural. There is a distinction

made in scripture by our Lord between these two things. "Fear not," says he, "them who can kill the body; but rather fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell."

We have, again, to observe respecting this, that what the apostle called the "soul," is not simply distinguishable from the body, but also from the spirit; and on that distinction I have already touched. By the soul the apostle means our powers natural—the powers which we have by nature. Herein is the soul distinguishable from the spirit. In the Epistle to the Corinthians we read—"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." Observe, there is a distinction drawn between the natural man and the spiritual. What is there translated "natural" is derived from precisely the same word as that which is here translated "soul." So that we may read just as correctly: "The man under the dominion of the soul receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things." And again, the apostle, in the same epistle to the Corinthians, writes: "That is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural:" *i. e.*, the endowments of the soul precede the endowments of the spirit. You have the same truth in other places. The powers that belong to the Spirit were not the first developed; but the powers which belong to the soul, that is, the powers of nature. Again, in the same chapter, reference is made to the natural and spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. Literally, there is a body governed by the soul—that is, powers natural: and there is a body governed by the Spirit—that is higher nature. Let then this be borne in mind, that what the apostle calls "soul" is the same as that which he calls, in another place, the "natural man." These powers are divisible into two branches—the intellectual powers and the moral sense.

The intellectual powers man has by nature. Man need not be regenerated in order to possess the power of reasoning, or in order to invent. The intellectual powers belong to what the apostle calls the "soul." The moral sense distinguishes between right and wrong. The apostle tells us, in the Epistle to the Romans, that the heathen—manifestly natural men—had the "work of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also bearing witness."

The third division of which the apostle speaks, he calls the "spirit;" and by the spirit he means that life in man which, in his natural state, is in such an embryo condition, that it can scarcely be said to exist at all—that which is called out into power and vitality by regeneration—the perfection of the powers of human nature. And you will observe, that it is not merely the instinctive life, nor the intellectual life, nor the moral life, but it is principally our nobler affections—that existence, that state of being, which we call love. That is the department of human nature which the apostle calls the spirit; and accordingly, when the Spirit of God was given on the day of Pentecost, you will remember that another power of man was called out, differing from what he had before. That Spirit granted on the day of Pentecost did subordinate to Himself, and was intended to subordinate to Himself, the will, the understanding, and the affection of man; but you often find these spiritual powers were distinguished from the natural powers, and existed without them. So in the highest state of religious life, we are told, men prayed in the spirit. Till the spirit has subordinated the understanding, the gift of God is not complete—has not done its work. It is abundantly evident that a new life was called out. It was not merely the sharpening of the intellectual powers; it was calling out powers of aspiration and love to God; those affections which have in them something boundless, that are not limited to this earth, but seek their completion in the mind of God Himself.

Now, what we have to say respecting this threefold state of man is, it is a state of discord. Let us take up a very

simple, popular, every-day illustration. We hear it remarked frequently in conversation of a man, that if only his will were commensurate with his knowledge, he would be a great man. His knowledge is great—his powers are almost unbounded; he has gained knowledge from nearly every department of science; but somehow or other—you cannot tell why—there is such an indecision, such a vacillation about the man, that he scarcely knows what to do, and, perhaps, does nothing in this world. You find it remarked, respecting another class of men, that their will is strong, almost unbounded in its strength—they have iron wills; yet there is something so narrow in their conceptions, something so bounded in their views, so much of stagnation in their thoughts, so much of prejudice in all their opinions, that their will is prevented from being directed to anything in a proper manner. Here is the discord in human nature. There is a distinction between the will and the understanding. And sometimes a feeble will goes with a strong understanding, or a powerful will is found in connection with great feebleness or ignorance of the understanding.

Let us, however, go into this more specially. The first cause of discord in this threefold state of man is the state in which the body is the ruler; and this, my Christian brethren, you find most visibly developed in the uneducated and irreligious poor. I say uneducated and irreligious, because it is by no means education alone which can subordinate the flesh to the higher man. The religious uneducated poor man may be master of his lower passions; but in the uneducated and irreligious poor man, these show themselves in full force; this discord—this want of unity—appears, as it were, in a magnified form. There is a strong man—health bursting, as it were, at every pore, with an athletic body; but coarse, and rude, and intellectually weak—almost an animal. When you are regarding the upper classes of society, you see less distinctly the absence of the spirit, unless you look with a spiritual eye. The coarseness has passed away—the rudeness is no longer seen: there is a refinement in the pleasures. But if you take the life led

by the young men of our country—strong, athletic, healthy men—it is still the life of the flesh: the unthinking, and unprincipled life in which there is as yet no higher life developed. It is a life which, in spite of its refinement, the Bible condemns as the life of the sensualist.

We pass on, now, to another state of discord—a state in which the soul is ruined. Brethren, this is a natural result—this is what might have been expected. The natural man gradually subordinates the flesh, the body, to the soul. It is natural in the development of individuals, it is natural in the development of society: in the development of individuals, because that childlike, infantine life which exists at first, and is almost entirely a life of appetites, gradually subsides. Higher wants, higher desires, loftier inclinations arise; the passions of the young man gradually subside, and by degrees the more rational life comes: the life is changed—the pleasures of the senses are forsaken for those of the intellect. It appears natural, again, in the development of society. Civilization will subordinate the flesh to the soul. In the savage state, you find the life of the animal. Civilization is teaching a man, on the principle of this world, to subordinate his appetites; to rule himself; and there comes a refinement, and a gentleness, and a polish, and an enjoyment of intellectual pleasures; so that the man is no longer what the apostle calls a sensual man, but he becomes now what the apostle calls a natural man. We can see this character delineated in the Epistle to the Ephesians. "Then we were," says the apostle, "in our gentile state, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." Man naturally fulfils not merely the desires of the flesh, but the desires of the mind. "And were," says the apostle, "children of wrath." One of the saddest spectacles is the decay of the natural man before the work of the Spirit has been accomplished in him. When the savage dies—when a mere infant dies—when an animal dies—there is nothing that is appalling or depressing there; but when the high, the developed intellect—when the cultivated man comes to the last hours of life, and the memory becomes

less powerful, and the judgment fails, and all that belongs to nature and to earth visibly perishes, and the higher life has not been yet developed, though it is destined to survive the grave for ever—even the life of God—there is here ample cause for grief; and it is no wonder that the man of genius merely should shed tears at the idea of decaying life.

We pass on to consider the Trinity in unity. All this is contained in that simple expression, "The God of peace." God is a God of unity. He makes one where before there were two. He is the God of peace, and therefore can make peace. Now this peace, according to the Trinitarian doctrine, consists in a threefold unity. Brethren, as we remarked respecting this first of all, the distinction in this trinity is not a physical distinction, but a metaphysical one. The illustrations which are often given are illustrations drawn from material sources: if we take only those, we get into contradiction: for example, when we talk of personality, our idea is of a being bounded by space; and then to say in this sense that three persons are one, and one is three, is simply contradictory and absurd. Remember that the doctrine of the Trinity is a metaphysical doctrine. It is a trinity—a division in the mind of God. It is not three materials; it is three persons in a sense we shall explain by and by.

In the next place I will endeavour to explain the doctrine—not to prove it, but to show its rationality and to explain what it is.

The first illustration we endeavour to give in this is taken from the world of matter. We will take any material substance; we find in that substance qualities; we will say three qualities—colour, shape, and size. Colour is not shape, shape is not size, size is not colour. They are three distinct essences, three distinct qualities, and yet they all form one unity, one single conception, one idea—the idea, for example, of a tree.

Now we will ascend from that into the immaterial world; and here to be something more distinct still. Hitherto, we have had but three qualities; we now come to the mind

of man, where we find something more than qualities. We will take three—the will, the affections, and the thoughts of man. His will is not his affections, neither are his affections his thoughts; and it would be imperfect and incomplete to say that these are mere qualities in the man. They are separate consciousnesses, living consciousnesses—as distinct, and as really sundered as it is possible for three things to be, yet bound together by one unity of consciousness. Now we have distincter proof than even this that these things are three. The anatomist can tell you that the localities of these powers are different. He can point out the seat of the nerve of sensation; he can localize the feeling of affection; he can point to a nerve and say, "There resides the locality of thought."

There are three distinct localities for three distinct qualities, personalities, consciousnesses; yet all these three are one.

Once more, we will give proof even beyond all that. The act that a man does is done by one particular part of that man. You may say it was a work of his genius, or of his fancy; it may have been a manifestation of his love, or an exhibition of his courage; yet that work was the work of the whole man: his courage, his intellect, his habits of perseverance, all helped towards the completion of that single work. Just in this way certain special works are attributed to certain personalities of the Deity; the work of redemption being attributed to one, the work of sanctification to another. And yet just as the whole man was engaged in doing that work, so does the whole Deity perform that work which is attributed to one essential.

Once more, let us remember that principle which we expounded last Sunday, that it is the law of Being that in proportion as you rise from lower to higher life, the parts are more distinctly developed, while yet the unity becomes more entire. You find, for example, in the lowest forms of animal life one organ performs several functions, one organ being at the same time heart and brain and blood-vessels. But when you come to man, you find all these various

functions existing in different organs, and every organ more distinctly developed; and yet the unity of a man is a higher unity than that of a limpet. When you come from the material world to the world immaterial, you find that the more society is cultivated—the more man is cultivated—the more marvellous is the power of developing distinct powers. In the savage life it is almost all one feeling; but in proportion as the higher education advances and the higher life appears, every power and faculty develops and distinguishes itself, and becomes distinct and separate. And yet just in proportion as in a nation every part is distinct, the unity is greater, and just in proportion as in an individual every power is most complete, and stands out most distinct, just in that proportion has the man reached the entireness of his humanity.

Now, brethren, we apply all this to the mind of God. The Trinitarian maintains against the Unitarian and the Sabellian, that the higher you ascend in the scale of being, the more distinct are the consciousnesses, and that the law of unity implies and demands a manifold unity. The doctrine of Sabellianism, for example, is this, that God is but one essence—but one person under different manifestations; and that when He made the world He was called the Father, when He redeemed the world He was called the Son, and when He sanctified the world He was called the Holy Ghost. The Sabellian and the Unitarian maintain that the unity of God consists simply in a unity of person, and in opposition to this does the Trinitarian maintain that grandness, either in man or in God, must be a unity of manifoldness.

But we will enter into this more deeply. The first power or consciousness in which God is made known to us is as the Father, the Author of our being. It is written, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." He is the Author of all life. In this sense He is not merely our Father as Christians, but the Father of mankind; and not merely the Father of mankind, but the Father of creation; and in this way the sublime language of the prophets may be taken as

true literally, "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy;" and the language of the canticle which belongs to our morning service, the deeps, the fountains, the wells, all unite in one hymn of praise, one everlasting hallelujah to God the Father, the Author of their being. In this respect, simply as the Author of life, merely as the Supreme Being, God has reference to us in relation to the body. He is the Lord of life: in Him we live, and move, and have our being. In this respect God to us is as law—as the collected laws of the universe; and therefore to offend against law, and bring down the result of transgressing law, is said in Scripture language, because applied to a person, to be provoking the wrath of God the Father.

In the next place, the second way through which the personality and consciousness of God has been revealed to us is as the Son. Brethren, we see in all those writers who have treated of the Trinity, that much stress is laid upon this eternal generation of the Son, the everlasting sonship. It is this which we have in the Creed—the Creed which was read to-day—"God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds;" and, again, in the Nicene Creed, that expression, which is so often wrongly read, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God," means absolutely nothing. There are two statements made there. The first is this, "The Son was God:" the second is this, "The Son was—*of* God," showing his derivation. And in that, brethren, we have one of the deepest and most blessed truths of revelation. The Unitarian maintains a divine humanity—a blessed, blessed truth. There is a truth more blessed still—the humanity of Deity. Before the world was, there was that in the mind of God which we may call the humanity of His Divinity. It is called in Scripture the Word: the Son: the Form of God. It is in virtue of this that we have a right to attribute to Him our own feelings; it is in virtue of this that Scripture speaks of His wisdom, His justice, His love. Love in God is what love is in man; justice in God is what justice is in man; creative power in God is what creative power is in man; indignation in God

is that which indignation is in man, barring only this, that the one is emotional, but the other is calm, and pure, and everlastingly still. It is through this humanity in the mind of God, if I may dare so to speak of Deity, that a revelation became possible to man. It was the Word that was made flesh; it was the Word that manifested itself to man. It is in virtue of the connection between God and man, that God made man in His own image; that through a long line of prophets the human truth of God could be made known to man, till it came forth developed most entirely and at large in the incarnation of the Redeemer. Now, in this respect, it will be observed that God stands connected with us in relation to the soul as the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Once more; there is a nearer, a closer, and a more enduring relation in which God stands to us—that is, the relation of the Spirit. It is to the writings of St. John that we have to turn, especially, if we desire to know the doctrines of the Spirit. You will remember the strange way in which he speaks of God. It would almost seem as if the external God has disappeared to him; nay, as if an external Christ were almost forgotten, because the internal Christ has been formed. He speaks of God as kindred with us; he speaks of Christ as Christ in us; and "if we love one another," he says, "God dwelleth in us." If a man keep the commandments, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. So that the spiritual manifestation of God to us is that whereby He blends Himself with the soul of man.

These, then, my Christian brethren, are the three consciousnesses by which He becomes known to us. Three, we said, *known* to us. We do not dare to limit God; we do not presume to say that there are in God only three personalities—only three consciousnesses: all that we dare presume to say is this, that there are three in reference to us, and only three; that a fourth there is not; that, perchance, in the present state a fourth you cannot add to these—Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier.

Lastly, let us turn to the relation which the trinity in

unity bears to the triad in discord. It is intended for the entireness of our sanctification: "the very God of peace sanctify you wholly." Brethren, we dwell upon that expression "*wholly*." There is this difference between Christianity and every other system: Christianity proposes to ennoble the whole man; every other system subordinates parts to parts. Christianity does not despise the intellect, but it does not exalt the intellect in a one-sided way: it only dwells with emphasis on the third and highest part of man—his spiritual affections; and these it maintains are the chief and real seat of everlasting life, intended to subordinate the other to themselves. Asceticism would crush the natural affections —destroy the appetites. Asceticism feels that there is a conflict between the flesh and the spirit, and it would put an end to that conflict; it would bring back unity by the excision of all our natural appetites, and all the desires and feelings which we have by nature. But when the Apostle Paul comes forward to proclaim the will of God, he says it is not by the crushing of the body, but by the sanctification of the body: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In this, my Christian brethren, there is one of the deepest of all truths. Does a man feel himself the slave and the victim of his lower passions, let not that man hope to subdue them merely by struggling against them. Let him not by fasting, by austerity, by any earthly rule that he can conceive, expect to subdue the flesh. The more he thinks of his vile and lower feelings, the more will they be brought into distinctness, and therefore into power; the more hopelessly will he become their victim. The only way in which a man can subdue the flesh, is not by the extinction of those feelings, but by the elevation of their character. Let there be added to that character, sublimity of aim, purity of affection; let there be given grandeur, spiritual nobleness; and then, just as the strengthening of the whole constitution of the body makes any particular and local affection disappear, so by degrees, by the raising of the character, do

these lower affections become, not extinguished or destroyed by excision, but ennobled by a new and loftier spirit breathed through them.

This is the account given by the apostle. He speaks of the conflict between the flesh and the spirit. And his remedy is to give vigour to the higher, rather than to struggle with the lower. "This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and ye *shall not* fulfil the lust of the flesh."

Once more; the apostle differs from the world in this, that the world would restore this unity, and sanctify man simply from the soul. It is this which civilization pretends to effect. We hear much in these modern days of the progress of humanity. We hear of man's invention, of man's increase of knowledge; and it would seem in all this, as if man were necessarily becoming better. Brethren, it always must be the case in that state in which God is looked upon as the Supreme Being merely, where the intellect of man is supposed to be the chief thing—that which makes him most kindred to his Maker. The doctrine of Christianity is this—that unity of all this discord must be made. Man is to be made one with God, not by soaring intellect, but by lowly love. It is the Spirit which guides him to all truth; not merely by rendering more acute the reasoning powers, but by convincing of sin, by humbling man. It is the graces of the Spirit which harmonize the man, and make him one; and that is the end, and aim, and object of all the Gospel: the entireness of sanctification to produce a perfectly developed man. Most of us in this world are monsters, with some part of our being bearing the development of a giant, and others showing the proportions of a dwarf: a feeble, dwarfish will—mighty, full-blown passions; and therefore it is that there is to be visible through the trinity in us a noble, manifold unity; and when the triune power of God shall so have done its work on the entireness of our humanity, that the body, soul, and spirit have been sanctified, then shall there be exhibited, and only then, a perfect affection in man to his Maker, when body, soul, and spirit shall exhibit a trinity in unity.

ABSOLUTION

LUKE v. 21.—"And the Scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?"

THERE are questions which having been again and again settled, still, from time to time, present themselves for *re*-solution; errors which having been refuted, and cut up by the roots, re-appear in the next century as fresh and vigorous as ever. Like the fabled monsters of old, from whose dissevered neck the blood sprung forth and formed fresh heads, multiplied and indestructible; or like the weeds, which, extirpated in one place, sprout forth vigorously in another.

In every such case it may be taken for granted that the root of the matter has not been reached; the error has been exposed, but the truth which lay at the bottom of the error has not been disengaged. Every error is connected with a truth; the truth, being perennial, springs up again as often as circumstances foster it, or call for it, and the seeds of error which lay about the roots spring up again in the form of weeds, as before.

A popular illustration of this may be found in the belief in the appearance of the spirits of the departed. You may examine the evidence for every such alleged apparition; you may demonstrate the improbability; you may reduce it to an impossibility; still the popular feeling will remain; and there is a lurking superstition even among the enlightened, which, in the midst of professions of incredulity, shows itself in a readiness to believe the wildest new tale, if it possess but the semblance of an authentication. Now two truths lie at the root of this superstition. The first is the reality of the spirit-world, and the instinctive belief in it. The second is the fact that there are certain states of health in which the eye creates the objects which it perceives. The death-blow

to such superstition is only struck when we have not only proved that men have been deceived, but shown besides how they came to be deceived; when science has explained the optical delusion, and shown the physiological state in which such apparitions become visible. Ridicule will not do it. Disproof will not do it. So long as men feel that there is a spirit-world, and so long as to some the impression is vivid that they have seen it, you spend your rhetoric in vain. You must show the truth that lies below the error.

The principle we gain from this is that you cannot overthrow falsehood by negation, but by establishing the antagonistic truth. The refutation which is to last must be positive, not negative. It is an endless work to be uprooting weeds: plant the ground with wholesome vegetation, and then the juices which would have otherwise fed rankness will pour themselves into a more vigorous growth; the dwindled weeds will be easily raked out then. It is an endless task to be refuting error. *Plant truth*, and the error will pine away.

The instance, to which all this is preliminary, is the pertinacious hold which the belief in a human absolving power retains upon mankind. There has perhaps never yet been known a religion without such a belief. There is not a savage in the islands of the South Pacific who does not believe that his priest can shield him from the consequences of sin. There was not a people in antiquity who had not dispensers of Divine favour. That same belief passed from Paganism into Romanism. It was exposed at the period of the Reformation. A mighty reaction was felt against it throughout Europe. Apparently, the whole idea of human priesthood was proved, once and for ever, to be baseless; human mediation, in every possible form, was vehemently controverted; men were referred back to God as the sole absolver.

Yet still now again, three centuries after, the belief is as strong as ever. That which we thought dead is alive again, and not likely, it seems, to die. Recent revelations have

shown that confession is daily made in the country whose natural manners are most against it; private absolution asked by English men and given by English priests. A fact so significant might lead us well to pause, and ask ourselves whether we have found the true answer to the question. The negation we have got—the vehement denial; we are weary of its reiteration: but the positive truth which lies at the bottom of this craving—where is that? Parliaments and pulpits, senators and clergymen, have vied with each other in the vehemence with which they declare absolution un-Christian, un-English. All that is most abominable in the confessional has been with unsparing and irreverent indelicacy forced before the public mind. Still, men and women, whose holiness and purity are beyond slander's reach, come and crave assurance of forgiveness. How shall we reply to such men? Shall we say, "Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? who can forgive sins, but God only?" Shall we say it is all blasphemy; an impious intrusion upon the prerogatives of the One Absolver? Well, we may; it is *popular* to say we ought; but, you will observe, if we speak so, we do no more than the Pharisees in this text: we establish a negation; but a negation is only one side of truth. Moreover, we have been asserting that for 300 years, with small fruits. We keep asserting, Man cannot give assurance that sin is pardoned; in other words, man cannot absolve: but still the heart craves human assurance. What truth have we got to supply that craving? We shall, therefore, rather try to fathom the deeps of the positive truth which is the true reply to the error; we shall try to see whether there is not a real answer to the craving contained in the Redeemer's words. "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." What power is there in human forgiveness? What does absolution mean in the lips of a son of man? These are our questions for to-day. We shall consider two points.

I. The impotency of the negation.
II. The power of the positive truth.

The Pharisees denied the efficacy of human absolution: they said, "None can forgive sins, but God only:" that was a negation. What did they effect by their system of negations? They conferred no peace; they produced no holiness. It would be a great error to suppose that the Pharisees were hypocrites in the ordinary sense of the term —that is, pretending to be anxious about religion when they knew that they felt no anxiety. They *were* anxious, in their way. They heard a startling free announcement of forgiveness by a man. To them it appeared license given to sin. If this new teacher, this upstart—in their own language, "this fellow—of whom every man knew whence he was," were to go about the length and breadth of the land, telling sinners to be at peace; telling them to forget the past, and to work onwards; bidding men's consciences be at rest; and commanding them not to *fear* the God whom they had offended, but to *trust* in Him—what would become of morality and religion? This presumptuous Absolver would make men careless about both. If the indispensable safeguards of penalty were removed, what remained to restrain men from sin? For the Pharisees had no notion of any other goodness than that which is restrained; they could conceive no goodness free, but only that which is produced by rewards and punishments—law-goodness, law-righteousness: to dread God, not to love and trust Him, was their conception of religion. And this, indeed, is the *ordinary* conception of religion—the ordinary meaning implied to most minds by the word religion. The word religion means, by derivation, restriction or obligation—obligation to do, obligation to avoid. And this is the negative system of the Pharisees—scrupulous avoidance of evil, rather than positive and free pursuit of excellence. Such a system never produced anything but barren denial. "*This* is wrong;" "*that* is heresy;" "*that* is dangerous."

There was another class of men who denied human power of absolution. They were called Scribes or writers—pedants, men of ponderous learning and accurate definitions; from being mere transcribers of the law, they had risen to

be its expounders. They could define the exact number of yards that might be travelled on the Sabbath-day without infringement of the law; they could decide, according to the most approved theology, the respective importance of each duty; they would tell you, authoritatively, which was the *great* commandment of the law. The Scribe is a man who turns religion into etiquette: his idea of God is that of a monarch, transgression against whom is an offence against statute law, and he, the Scribe, is there to explain the prescribed conditions upon which the offence may be expiated; he has no idea of admission to the sovereign's presence, except by compliance with certain formalities which the Scribe is commissioned to declare.

There are therefore Scribes in all ages—Romish Scribes, who distinguish between venial and mortal sin, and apportion to each its appointed penance and absolution. There are Protestant Scribes, who have no idea of God but as an incensed judge, and prescribe certain methods of appeasing him—certain prices—in consideration of which He is willing to sell forgiveness; men who accurately draw the distinction between the different kinds of faith—faith historical and faith saving; who bewilder and confuse all natural feeling; who treat the natural love of relations as if it were an idolatry as great as bowing down to mammon; who make intelligible distinction between the work that *may* and the work that may *not* be done on the Sabbath-day; who send you into a perilous consideration of the workings of your own feelings, and the examination of your spiritual experiences, to ascertain whether you have the feelings which give you a right to call God a Father. They hate the Romish Scribe as much as the Jewish Scribe hated the Samaritan and called him heretic. But in their way they are true to the spirit of the Scribe.

Now, the result of this is fourfold. Among the tender-minded, despondency; among the vainer, spiritual pride; in the case of the slavish, superstition; with the hard-minded, infidelity. Ponder it well, and you will find these four things rife amongst us: Despondency, Spiritual Pride,

Superstition, and Infidelity. In this way we have been going on for many years. In the midst of all this, at last we are informed that the confessional is at work again; whereupon astonishment and indignation are loudly expressed. It is not to be borne that the priests of the Church of England should confess and absolve in private. Yet it is only what might have been expected. With our Evangelicalism, Tractarianism, Scribeisms, Pharisaisms, we have ceased to front the *living fact*—we are as zealous as Scribes and Pharisees ever were for negatives; but in the meantime human nature, oppressed and overborne, gasping for breath, demands something real and living. It cannot live on controversies. It cannot be fed on protests against heresy, however vehement. We are trying who can protest loudest. Every book, every journal, rings with warnings. "Beware!" is written upon everything. Beware of Rome; beware of Geneva; beware of Germany; some danger on every side; Satan everywhere — God *nowhere;* everywhere some man to be shunned or dreaded—nowhere one to be loved freely and without suspicion. Is it any wonder if men and women, in the midst of negations, cry, "Ye warn me from the error, but who will guide me into truth? I want guidance. I am sinful, full of evil! I want forgiveness! Absolve me; tell me that I am pardoned; help me to believe it. Your quarrels do not help me; if you cannot do *that*, it matters little what you *can* do. You have restricted God's love, and narrowed the path to heaven; you have hampered religion with so many mysterious questions and quibbles that I cannot find the way to God; you have terrified me with so many snares and pitfalls on every side, that I dare not tread at all. Give me peace; give me human guidance: I want a human arm to lean on." This is a cry, I believe, becoming daily more passionate, and more common. And no wonder that all our information, public and private, is to the same effect—that the recent converts have found peace in Rome; for the secret of the power of Rome is this—that she grounds her teaching, not on variable feelings and correct opinions, but on *facts.*

God is not a highly probable God, but a *fact.* God's forgiveness is not a feeling, but a *fact;* and a material symbolic fact is the witness of the invisible one. Rome puts forward her absolution as a visible fact, witness of the invisible: her false, priestly, magical absolution. And her perversion prevails because founded on a truth.

II. The power of the positive truth.

Is it any wonder, if taught on every side distrust of man, the heart should, by a violent reaction, and by an extravagant confidence in a priest, proclaim that its normal, natural state is not distrust, but trust?

What is forgiveness?—It is God reconciled to us. What is absolution?—It is the authoritative declaration that God is reconciled. Authoritative: that is, a real power of conveying a sense and feeling of forgiveness. It is the power of the Son of Man *on earth* to forgive sins. It is man, God's image, representing, by his forgiveness on earth, God's forgiveness in heaven. Now distinguish God's forgiveness of sin from an arresting of the consequences of sin. When God forgives a sin, it does not follow that He stops its consequences: for example, when He forgives the intemperate man whose health is ruined, forgiveness does not restore his health. Divine pardon does not interfere with the laws of the universe, for it is itself one of those laws. It is a law that penalty follows transgression. Forgiveness will not save from penalty; but it alters the feelings with which the penalty is accepted. Pain inflicted with a surgeon's knife for a man's good, is as keen as that which results from the knife of the torturer; but in the one case it is calmly borne, because remedial—in the other it exasperates, because it is felt to be intended by malevolence. So with the difference between suffering which comes from a sin which we hope God has forgiven, and suffering which seems to fall hot from the hand of an angry God. It is a fearful truth, that so far as we know at least, the consequences of an act are connected with it indissolubly. Forgiveness does not arrest them; but by

producing softness and grateful penitence, it transforms them into blessings. This is God's forgiveness; and absolution is the conveyance to the conscience of the conviction of forgiveness: to absolve is to free—to comfort by strengthening—to afford repose from fear.

Now it was the way of the Redeemer to emancipate from sin by the freeness of absolution. The dying thief, an hour before a blasphemer, was unconditionally assured; the moment the sinner's feelings changed towards God, He proclaimed that God was reconciled to him: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." And hence, speaking humanly, hence, from this absolving tone and spirit, came this wondrous and unparalleled power with sinful, erring hearts; hence the life and fresh impulse which He imparted to the being and experience to those with whom He dealt. Hence the maniac, freed from the legion, sat at His feet, clothed, and in his right mind. Hence the outcast woman, whom human scorn would have hardened into brazen effrontery, hearing an unwonted voice of human sympathy, "washed His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head." And this is what we have forgotten: we have not yet learned to trust the power of redeeming love; we do not believe in the omnipotence of grace and the might of an appeal to the better parts, and not the slavish parts of human nature. Settle it in your minds, the absolving power is the central secret of the Gospel. Salvation is unconditional; not an offer, but *a Gift;* not clogged with conditions, but free as the air we breathe. God welcomes back the prodigal. God loves without money and without price. To this men reply gravely, It is dangerous to speak thus; it is perilous to dispense with the safeguards of restriction. Law! law! there is nothing like law—a salutary fear—for making men holy. O blind Pharisee! had you ever known the spring, the life which comes from feeling *free*, the gush of gratitude with which the heart springs to duty when all chains are shattered, and it stands fearless and free in the Light, and in the Love of God—you would understand that a

large trusting charity, which can throw itself on the better and more generous impulses of a laden spirit, is the safest as well as the most beautiful means of securing obedience.

So far, however, there will not be much objection to the doctrine: it will be admitted that absolution is true in the lips of Christ, because of His Divinity. It will be said He was God, and God speaking on earth is the same thing as God speaking in heaven. No, my brethren, it is *not* the same thing. Christ forgiving on earth is *a new truth* added to that of God's forgiving in heaven. It is not the same truth. The one is forgiveness by Deity; the other is the declaration of forgiveness by Humanity. He bade the palsied man walk, that they might know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins. Therefore we proceed a step further. The same power He delegated to His Church which He had exercised Himself. "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted." Now, perhaps, it will be replied to this, that that promise belongs to the apostles; that they were supernaturally gifted to distinguish genuine from feigned repentance; to absolve, therefore, was their natural prerogative, but that we have no right to say it extends beyond the apostles.

We, therefore, bring the question to a point by referring to an instance in which an apostle did absolve. Let us examine whether St. Paul confined the prerogative to himself. 2 Cor. ii. 10, "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also: for to whom I forgave anything for your sakes, forgave I it in the person of Christ."

Observe now: it is quite true here that the apostle absolved a man whose excommunication he had formerly required; but he absolved him because the congregation absolved him; not as a plenipotentiary supernaturally gifted to convey a mysterious benefit, but as himself an organ and representative of the Church. The power of absolution, therefore, belonged to the Church, and to the apostle through the Church. It was a power belonging to *all* Christians: to the apostle, because he was a Christian,

not because he was an apostle. A priestly power, no doubt, because Christ has made all Christians kings and priests.

Now let us turn again, with this added light, to examine the meaning of that expression, "The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." Mark that form of words —not Christ as God, but Christ as Son of man. It was manifestly said by Him, not solely as divine, but rather as human, as the Son of man; that is, as Man. For we may take it as a rule: when Christ calls Himself Son of man, He is asserting His Humanity. It was said by the High Priest of Humanity in the name of the race. It was said on the principle that human nature is the reflection of God's nature: that human love is the image of God's love; and that human forgiveness is the type and assurance of divine forgiveness.

In Christ humanity was the perfect type of Deity, and therefore Christ's absolution was always the exact measure and counterpart of God's forgiveness. Herein lies the deep truth of the doctrine of His eternal priesthood—the Eternal Son—the Humanity of the Being of God—the ever Human mind of God. The Absolver ever lives. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son—hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man.

But further than this. In a subordinate, because less perfect degree, the forgiveness of a man as man carries with it an absolving power. Who has not felt the load taken from his mind when the hidden guilt over which he had brooded long has been acknowledged, and met by forgiving human sympathy, especially at a time when he expected to be treated with coldness and reproof? Who has not felt how such a moment was to him the dawn of a better hope, and how the merciful judgment of some wise and good human being seemed to be the type and the assurance of God's pardon, making it credible? Unconsciously it may be, but still in substance, really, I believe some such reasoning as *this* goes on in the whispers of the heart—"He

loves me, and has compassion on me—will not God forgive? He, this man, made in God's image, does not think my case hopeless. Well, then, in the larger love of God it is not hopeless." Thus, and only thus, can we understand the *ecclesiastical* act. Absolution, the prerogative of our humanity, is represented by a formal act of the Church. Much controversy and angry bitterness has been spent on the absolution put by the Church of England into the lips of her ministers—I cannot think with justice—if we try to get at the root of these words of Christ. The priest proclaims forgiveness authoritatively as the organ of the congregation—as the voice of the Church, in the name of Man and God. For human nature represents God. The Church represents what human nature is and ought to be. The minister represents the Church. He speaks, therefore, in the name of our godlike, human nature. He declares a divine fact; he does not create it. There is no magic in his absolution: he can no more forgive whom God has not forgiven, by the formula of absolution, or reverse the pardon of him whom God has absolved by the formula of excommunication, than he can transfer a demon into an angel by the formula of baptism. He declares what every one has a right to declare, and ought to declare by his lips and by his conduct; but, being a minister, he declares it authoritatively in the name of every Christian who by his Christianity is a priest to God; he specializes what is universal; as in baptism, he seals the universal Sonship on the individual by name, saying, "The Sonship with which Christ has redeemed all men, I hereby proclaim for this child;" so by absolution he specializes the universal fact of the love of God to those who are listening then and there, saying, "The Love of God the Absolver, I authoritatively proclaim to be *yours*."

In the Service for the Visitation of the Sick, the Church of England puts into the lips of her ministers words quite unconditional: "I absolve thee from all thy sins." You know that passage is constantly objected to as Romish and superstitious. I would not give up that precious passage.

I love the Church of England, because she has dared to claim her inheritance—because she has courage to assert herself as what she ought to be—God's representative on earth. She says to her minister, Stand there before a darkened spirit, on whom the shadows of death have begun to fall: in human flesh and blood representing the Invisible,—with words of human love making credible the Love Eternal. Say boldly, I am here to declare not a perhaps, *but a fact.* I forgive thee in the name of Humanity. And so far as Humanity represents Deity, that forgiveness is a type of God's. She does not put into her minister's lips words of incantation. He cannot bless whom God has not blessed—he cannot curse whom God has not cursed. If the Son of absolution be there, his absolution will rest. If you have ever tried the slow and apparently hopeless task of ministering to a heart diseased, and binding up the wound that *will* bleed afresh, to which no assurances can give comfort, because they are not authoritative, it must have crossed your mind that such a power as that which the Church of England claims, if it were believed, is exactly the remedy you want. You must have felt that even the formula of the Church of Rome would be a blessed power to exercise, could it but once be accepted as a pledge that all the past was obliterated, and that from that moment a free untainted future lay before the soul—you must have *felt* that; you must have wished you had dared to *say* it. My whole spirit has absolved my erring brother. Is God less merciful than I? Can I—dare I—say or think it conditionally? Dare I say, I hope? May I not, must I not, say, *I know* God has forgiven you? Every man whose heart has truly bled over another's sin, and watched another's remorse with pangs as sharp as if the crime had been his own, *has* said it. Every parent has said it, who ever received back a repentant daughter and opened out for her a new hope for life. Every mother has said it who ever by her hope against hope for some profligate, protested for a love deeper and wider than that of society. Every man has said it who forgave a deep

wrong. See then, *why* and *how* the Church absolves. She only exercises that power which belongs to every son of man. If society were Christian—if society, by its forgiveness and its exclusion, truly represented the mind of God—there would be no necessity for a Church to speak; but the absolution of society and the world does not represent by any means God's forgiveness. Society absolves those whom God has *not* absolved—the proud, the selfish, the strong, the seducer; society refuses return and acceptance to the seduced, the frail, and the sad penitent, whom God has accepted; therefore it is necessary that a selected body, through its appointed organs, should do in the name of man what man, as such, does not. The Church is the ideal of Humanity. It represents what God intended man to be—what man is in God's sight as beheld in Christ by Him; and the minister of the Church speaks as the representative of that ideal humanity. Church absolution is an eternal protest, in the name of God the Absolver, against the false judgments of society.

One thing more. Beware of making this a dead formula. If absolution be not a living truth, it becomes a monstrous falsehood: if you take absolution as a mystical gift conveyed to an individual man called a priest, and mysteriously efficacious in *his* lips, and his *alone*, you petrify a truth into death and unreality. I have been striving to show that absolution is not a Church figment, invented by priestcraft, but a living, blessed, human power. It is a power delegated to you and to me, and just so far as we exercise it lovingly and wisely, in our lives, and with our lips, we help men away from sin: just so far as we do not exercise it, or exercise it falsely, we drive men to Rome. For if the heart cannot have a truth it will take a counterfeit of truth. By every magnanimous act, by every free forgiveness with which a pure man forgives, or pleads for mercy, or assures the penitent, he proclaims this truth, that "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins"—he exhibits the priestly power of humanity—*he does* absolve; let theology say what it will of absolution, he gives peace to the con-

science—he is a type and assurance of what God is—he breaks the chains and lets the captive go free.

THE RESTORATION OF THE ERRING

GALATIANS vi. 1, 2.—"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."

IT would be a blessed thing for our Christian society if we could contemplate sin from the same point of view from which Christ and His apostles saw it. But in this matter society is ever oscillating between two extremes, undue laxity and undue severity.

In one age of the Church, the days of Donatism for instance, men refuse the grace of repentance to those who have erred: holding that baptismal privileges once forfeited cannot be got back: that for a single distinct lapse there is no restoration.

In another age, the Church, having found out its error, and discovered the danger of setting up an impossible standard, begins to confer periodical absolutions and plenary indulgences, until sin, easily forgiven, is as easily committed.

And so too with societies and legislatures. In one period puritanism is dominant and morals severe. There are no small faults. The statute-book is defiled with the red mark of blood, set opposite innumerable misdemeanors. In an age still earlier, the destruction of a wild animal is punished like the murder of a man. Then in another period we have such a medley of sentiments and sickliness that we have lost all our bearings, and cannot tell what is vice and what is goodness. Charity and toleration degenerate into that feeble dreaminess which refuses to be roused by stern views of life.

This contrast too, may exist in the same age, nay, in the same individual. One man gifted with talent, or privileged by rank, outrages all decency: the world smiles, calls it eccentricity, forgives and is very merciful and tolerant. Then some one unshielded by these advantages, endorsed neither by wealth nor birth, sins—not to one-tenth, nor one ten-thousandth part of the same extent: society is seized with a virtuous indignation—rises up in wrath—asks what is to become of the morals of the community if these things are committed: and protects its proprieties by a rigorous exclusion of the offender, cutting off the bridge behind him against his return for ever.

Now the Divine Character of the New Testament is shown in nothing more signally than in the stable ground from which it views this matter, in comparison with the shifting and uncertain standing-point from whence the world sees it. It says, never retracting nor bating, "The wages of sin is death." It speaks sternly with no weak sentiment, "Go, sin no more, lest a worse thing happen unto thee." But then it accepts every excuse, admits every palliation: looks upon this world of temptation and these frail human hearts of ours, not from the cell of a monk or the study of a recluse, but in a large, real way: accepts the existence of sin as a fact, without affecting to be shocked or startled: assumes that it must needs be that offences come, and deals with them in a large noble way, as the results of a disease which must be met, should be cured, and can.

I. The Christian view of other men's sin.
II. The Christian power of restoration.

I. The first thing noticeable in the apostle's view of sin is, that he looks upon it as if it might be sometimes the result of a surprise. "If a man be overtaken in a fault." In the original, anticipated, taken suddenly in front. As if circumstances had been beforehand with the man: as if sin, supposed to be left far behind, had on a sudden got in front, tripped him up, or led him into ambush.

All sins are not of this character. There are some which

are in accordance with the general bent of our disposition: and the opportunity of committing them was only the first occasion for manifesting what was in the heart: so that if they had not been committed then they probably would or must have been at some other time, and looking back to them we have no right to lay the blame on circumstances—we are to accept the penalty as a severe warning meant to show what was in our hearts.

There are other sins of a different character. It seems as if it were not in us to commit them. They were so to speak unnatural to us: you were going quietly on your way, thinking no evil, suddenly temptation, for which you were not prepared, presented itself, and before you knew where you were, you were in the dust, fallen.

As for instance, when a question is suddenly put to a man which never ought to have been put, touching a secret of his own or another's. Had he the presence of mind or adroitness, he might turn it aside, or refuse to reply. But being unprepared and accosted suddenly, he says hastily that which is irreconcileable with strict truth: then to substantiate and make it look probable, misrepresents or invents something else: and so he has woven round himself a mesh which will entangle his conscience through many a weary day and many a sleepless night.

It is shocking, doubtless, to allow ourselves even to admit that this is possible: yet no one knowing human nature from men and not from books, will deny that this might befall even a brave and true man. St. Peter was both: yet this was his history. In a crowd, suddenly, the question was put directly, "This man also was with Jesus of Nazareth." Then a prevarication—a lie; and yet another. This was a sin of surprise. He was overtaken in a fault.

Every one of us admits the truth of this in his own case. Looking back to past life, he feels that the errors which have most terribly determined his destiny were the result of mistake. Inexperience, a hasty promise, excess of trust, incaution, nay, even a generous devotion, have been fearfully, and as it seems to us, inadequately chastised. There may

be some undue tenderness to ourselves when we thus palliate the past: still a great part of such extenuation is only justice.

Now the Bible simply requires that we should judge others by the same rule by which we judge ourselves. The law of Christ demands that what we plead in our own case, we should admit in the case of others. Believe that in this or that case which you judge so harshly, the heart in its deeps did not consent to sin, nor by preference love what is hateful: simply admit that such an one may have been overtaken in a fault. This is the large law of Charity.

1. Again, the apostle considers fault as that which has left a burden on the erring spirit. "Bear ye one another's burdens."

For we cannot say to the laws of God I was overtaken. We live under stern and unrelenting laws, which permit no excuse and never hear of a surprise. They never send a man who has failed once, back to try a second chance. There is no room for a mistake; you play against them for your life: and they exact the penalty inexorably, "Every man must bear his own burden." Every law has its own appropriate penalty: and the wonder of it is that often the severest penalty seems set against the smallest transgression: we suffer more for our vices than our crimes: we pay dearer for our imprudences than even for our deliberate wickedness.

Let us examine this a little more closely. One burden laid on fault, is that chain of entanglement which seems to drag down to fresh sins. One step necessitates many others. One fault leads to another, and crime to crime. The soul gravitates downward beneath its burden. It was profound knowledge indeed which prophetically refused to limit Peter's sin to once. "Verily I say unto thee . . . thou shalt deny Me thrice."

We will try to describe that sense of burden. A fault has the power sometimes of distorting life till all seems hideous and unnatural. A man who has left his proper nature, and seems compelled to say and do things un-

natural and in false show, who has thus become untrue to himself,—to him life and the whole universe becomes untrue. He can grasp nothing—he does not stand on fact—he is living as in a dream—himself a dream. All is ghastly, unreal, spectral. A burden is on him as of a nightmare. He moves about in nothingness, and shadows, as if he were not. His own existence swiftly passing, might seem a phantom life, were it not for the corroding pang of anguish in his soul, for that at least is real!

2. Add to this, the burden of the heart weighing on itself. It has been truly said that the human heart is like the millstone, which, if there be wheat beneath it, will grind to purposes of health; if not, will grind still, at the will of the wild wind, but on itself. So does the heart wear out itself, against its own thought. One fixed idea—one remembrance, and no other—one stationary, wearing anguish. This is remorse, passing into despair; itself the goad to fresh and wilder crimes.

The worst of such a burden is that it keeps down the soul from good.

Many an ethereal spirit, which might have climbed the heights of holiness, and breathed the rare and difficult air of the mountain top, where the heavenliest spirituality alone can live, is weighed down by such a burden to the level of the lowest. If you know such an one, mark his history—without restoration, his career is done. That soul will not grow henceforth.

3. The burden of a secret.

Some here know the weight of an uncommunicated sin. They know how it lies like ice upon the heart. They know how dreadful a thing the sense of hypocrisy is; the knowledge of inward depravity, while all without looks pure as snow to men.

How heavy this weight may be, we gather from these indications. First, from this strange, psychological fact. A man with a guilty secret will tell out the tale of his crimes as under the personality of another: a mysterious necessity seems to force him to give it utterance. As in the old

fable of him who breathed out his weighty secret to the reeds: a remarkable instance of this is afforded in the case of that murderer, who, from the richness of his gifts and the enormity of his crime, is almost an historical personage, who, having become a teacher of youth, was in the habit of narrating to his pupils the anecdote of his crime, with all the circumstantial particularity of fact; but all the while, under the guise of a pretended dream. Such men tread for ever on the very verge of a confession: they seem to take a fearful pleasure in talking of their guilt, as if the heart could not bear its own burden, but must give it *outness*.

Again, it is evidenced by the attempt to get relief in profuse and general acknowledgments of guilt. They adopt the language of religion: they call themselves vile dust and miserable sinners. The world takes generally what they mean particularly. But they get no relief, they only deceive themselves; for they have turned the truth itself into a falsehood, using true words which they know convey a false impression, and getting praise for humility instead of punishment for guilt. They have used all the effort, and suffered all the pang, which it would have cost them to get real relief; and they have not got it: and the burden unacknowledged remains a burden still.

The third indication we have of the heaviness of this burden is the commonness of the longing for confession. None but a minister of the gospel can estimate this: he only, who looking round his congregation, can point to person after person whose wild tale of guilt or sorrow he is cognizant of; who can remember how often similar griefs were trembling upon lips which did not unburden themselves: whose heart being the receptacle of the anguish of many, can judge what is in human hearts: he alone can estimate how much there is of sin and crime lying with the weight and agony of concealment on the spirits of our brethren.

Burden 4.—An intuitive consciousness of the hidden sins of other's hearts.

To two states of soul it is given to detect the presence

of evil: states the opposite of each other—innocence and guilt.

It was predicted of the Saviour while yet a child, that by Him the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed: the fulfilment of this was the history of His life. He went through the world, by His innate purity detecting the presence of evil, as He detected the touch of her who touched His garment in the crowd.

Men, supposed spotless before, fell down before Him crying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" This in a lower degree is true of all innocence; you would think that one who can deeply read the human heart and track its windings must be himself deeply experienced in evil. But it is not so; at least not always. Purity can detect the presence of the evil which it does not understand: just as the dove which has never seen a hawk, trembles at its presence: and just as a horse rears uneasily when the wild beast unknown and new is near, so innocence understands, yet understands not the meaning of the unholy look, the guilty tone, the sinful manner. It shudders and shrinks from it by a power given to it, like that which God has conferred on the unreasoning mimosa. Sin gives the same power: but differently. Innocence apprehends the approach of evil, by the instinctive tact of contrast. Guilt by the instinctive consciousness of similarity. It is the profound truth contained in the history of the Fall. The eyes are opened: the knowledge of good and evil has come. The soul knows its own nakedness: but it knows also the nakedness of all other souls which have sinned after the similitude of its own sin.

Very marvellous is that test power of guilt: it is vain to think of eluding its fine capacity of penetration. Intimations of evil are perceived and noted, when to other eyes all seems pure. The dropping of an eye—the shunning of a subject—the tremulousness of a tone—the peculiarity of a subterfuge, will tell the tale. These are tendencies like mine, and there is a spirit conscious as my own is conscious.

This dreadful burden the Scriptures call the knowledge of

good and evil: can we not all remember the salient sense of happiness, which we had when all was innocent? when crime was the tale of some far distant hemisphere, and the guilt we heard of was not suspected in the hearts of the beings around us? and can we not recollect too, how by our own sin, or the cognizance of other's sin, there came a something which hung the heavens with shame and guilt, and all around seemed laden with evil? This is the worst burden that comes from transgression: loss of faith in human goodness: the being sentenced to go through life haunted with a presence from which we cannot escape: the presence of Evil in the hearts of all that we approach.

II. The Christian power of restoration: "Ye which are spiritual, restore such an one."

First, then, restoration is possible. That is a Christian fact. Moralists have taught us what sin is: they have explained how it twines itself into habit: they have shown us its ineffaceable character. It was reserved for Christianity to speak of restoration. Christ, and Christ only, has revealed that he who has erred may be restored, and made pure and clean and whole again.

Next, however, observe that this restoration is accomplished by men. Causatively, of course, and immediately, restoration is the work of Christ and of God the Spirit. Mediately and instrumentally, it is the work of men. "*Brethren* . . . . restore such an one." God has given to man the power of elevating his brother man. He has conferred on His Church the power of the keys to bind and loose. "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained." It is therefore in the power of man, by his conduct, to restore his brother, or to hinder his restoration. He may loose him from his sins, or retain their power upon his soul.

Now the words of the text confine us to two modes in which this is done: by sympathy and by forgiveness. "Bear ye one another's burdens."

By sympathy: we Protestants have one unvarying sneer

ready for the system of the Romish confessional. They confess, we say, for the sake of absolution, that absolved they may sin again. A shallow, superficial sneer, as all sneers are. In that craving of the heart which gives the system of the Confessional its dangerous power, there is something far more profound than any sneer can fathom. It is not the desire to sin again that makes men long to unburden their consciences; but it is the yearning to be true, which lies at the bottom, even of the most depraved hearts, to appear what they are and to lead a false life no longer: and besides, the desire of sympathy. For this comes out of that dreadful sense of loneliness which is the result of sinning: the heart severed from God, feels severed from all other hearts: goes alone, as if it had neither part nor lot with other men: itself a shadow among shadows. And its craving is for sympathy: it wants some human heart to know what it feels. Thousands upon thousands of laden hearts around us are crying, Come and bear my burden with me: and observe here, the apostle says, "Bear ye *one another's* burdens." Nor let the priest bear the burdens of all: that were most unjust. Why should the priest's heart be the common receptacle of all the crimes and wickedness of a congregation? "Bear ye *one another's* burdens."

Again, by forgiveness. There is a truth in the doctrine of absolution. God has given to man the power to absolve his brother, and so restore him to himself. The forgiveness of man is an echo and an earnest of God's forgiveness. He whom society has restored realizes the possibility of restoration to God's favour. Even the mercifulness of one good man sounds like a voice of pardon from heaven: just as the power and the exclusion of men sound like a knell of hopelessness, and do actually bind the sin upon the soul. The man whom society will not forgive nor restore is driven into recklessness. This is the true Christian doctrine of absolution, as expounded by the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. ii. 7–10. The degrading power of severity, the restoring power of pardon, vested in the Christian community, the voice of the minister being but their voice.

Now then let us inquire into the Christianity of our society. Restoration is the essential work of Christianity. The gospel is the declaration of God's sympathy and God's pardon. In these two particulars, then, what is our right to be called a Christian community?

Suppose that a man is overtaken in a fault. What does he or what shall he do? Shall he retain it unacknowledged, or go through life a false man? God forbid. Shall he then acknowledge it to his brethren, that they by sympathy and merciful caution may restore him? Well, but it is not certain that it is exactly from those to whom the name of "brethren" most peculiarly belongs that he will not receive assistance? Can a man in mental doubt go to the members of the same religious communion? Does he not know that they precisely are the ones who will frown upon his doubts, and proclaim his sins? Will a clergyman unburden his mind to his brethren in the ministry? Are they not in their official rigour the least capable of largely understanding him? If a woman be overtaken in a fault, will she tell it to a sister-woman? Or does she not feel instinctively, that her sister-woman is ever the most harsh, the most severe, and the most ferocious judge?

Well, you sneer at the confessional; you complain that mistaken ministers of the Church of England are restoring it amongst us. But who are they that are forcing on the confessional? who drive laden and broken hearts to pour out their long pent-up sorrows into any ear that will receive them? I say it is we: we by our uncharitableness; we by our want of sympathy and unmerciful behaviour; we by the unchristian way in which we break down the bridge behind the penitent, and say, "On, on in sin—there is no returning."

Finally, the apostle tells us the spirit in which this is to be done, and assigns a motive for the doing it. The mode is "in the spirit of meekness." For Satan cannot cast out Satan. Sin cannot drive out sin. For instance, my anger cannot drive out another man's covetousness: my petulance or sneer cannot expel another's extravagance. The meekness of Christ alone has power. The charity which desires

another's goodness above his well-being; that alone succeeds in the work of restoration.

The motive is, "considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." For sin is the result of inclination, or weakness, combined with opportunity. It is therefore in a degree the offspring of circumstances. Go to the hulks, the jail, the penitentiary, the penal colony, statistics will almost mark out for you beforehand the classes which have furnished the inmates, and the exact proportion of the delinquency of each class. You will not find the wealthy there, nor the noble—nor those guarded by the fences of social life: but the poor, and the uneducated, and the frail, and the defenceless. Can you gravely surmise that this regular tabulation depends upon the superior virtue of one class compared with others? Or must you admit that the majority at least of those who have not fallen are safe because they were not tempted? Well, then, when St. Paul says, "consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted," it is as if he had written—Proud Pharisee of a man, complacent in thine integrity, who thankest God that thou art not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, &c., hast thou gone through the terrible ordeal and come off with unscathed virtue? Or art thou in all these points simply untried? Proud Pharisee of a woman, who passest by an erring sister with an haughty look of conscious superiority, dost thou know what temptation is, with strong feeling and mastering opportunity? Shall the rich cut crystal which stands on the table of the wealthy man, protected from dust and injury, boast that it has escaped the flaws, and the cracks, and the fractures which the earthern jar has sustained, exposed and subjected to rough and general uses? O man or woman! thou who wouldst be a Pharisee, consider, O consider thyself, "lest thou also be tempted."

PRAYER

MATTHEW xxvi. 39.—"And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou *wilt*."

No one will refuse to identify holiness with prayer. To say that a man is religious, is to say the same thing as to say he prays. For what is prayer? To connect every thought with the thought of God. To look on everything as His work and His appointment. To submit every thought, wish, and resolve to Him. To feel His presence, so that it shall restrain us even in our wildest joy. That is prayer. And what we are now, surely we are by prayer. If we have attained any measure of goodness, if we have resisted temptations, if we have any self-command, or if we live with aspirations and desires beyond the common, we shall not hesitate to ascribe all to prayer.

There is, therefore, no question among Christians about the efficacy of prayer; but that granted generally, then questionings and diversities of view begin. What is prayer? What is the efficacy of prayer? Is prayer necessarily words in form and sequence; or is there a real prayer that never can be syllabled? Does prayer change the outward universe, or does it alter our inward being? Does it work on God, or does it work on us?

To all these questions, I believe a full and sufficient answer is returned in the text. Let us examine it calmly, and without prejudice or prepossession. If we do, it cannot be but that we shall obtain a conclusion in which we may rest with peace, be it what it eventually may.

We will consider—

I. The right of petition.
II. Erroneous views of what prayer is.
III. The true efficacy of prayer.

I. The right of petition.

"Let this cup pass from me." We infer it to be a *right.*

1. Because it is a necessity of our human nature.

The Son of Man feels the hour at hand: shrinks from it, seeks solitude, flies from human society, feels the need of it again, and goes back. Here is that need of sympathy which forces us to feel for congenial thought among relations; and here is that recoil from cold unsympathizing natures, which forces us back to our loneliness again. In such an hour, they who have before forgotten prayer betake themselves to God: and in such an hour, even the most resigned are not without the wish, "Let this cup pass." Christ Himself has a separate wish—one human wish.

Prayer, then, is a necessity of our Humanity, rather than a duty. To force it as a duty is dangerous. Christ did not; never commanded it, never taught it till asked. This necessity is twofold. First, the necessity of sympathy. We touch other human spirits only at a point or two. In the deepest departments of thought and feeling we are alone; and the desire to escape that loneliness finds for itself a voice in prayer.

Next, the necessity of escaping the sense of a crushing Fate. The feeling that all things are fixed and unalterable, that we are surrounded by necessities which we cannot break through, is intolerable whenever it is realized. Our egotism cries against it; our innocent egotism, and the practical reconciliation[1] between our innocent egotism and hideous fatalism is Prayer, which realizes a living Person ruling all things with a Will.

2. Again, we base this right on our privilege as children. "My Father"—that sonship Christ shares with us reveals the human race as a family in which God is a Father, and Himself the elder brother. It would be a strange family, where the child's will dictates; but it would be also strange where a child may not, as a child, express its foolish wish,

[1] Mesothesis.

if it be only to have the impossibility of gratifying it explained.

3. Christ used it as a right, therefore we may.

There is many a case in life, where to act seems useless —many a truth which at times appears incredible. Then we throw ourselves on Him—He did it, He believed it, that is enough. He was wise, where I am foolish. He was holy, where I am evil. He must know. He must be right. I rely on Him. Bring what arguments you may: say that prayer cannot change God's will. I know it. Say that prayer ten thousand times comes back like a stone. Yes, but Christ prayed, therefore I may and I will pray. Not only so, but I *must* pray; the wish felt and not uttered before God, is a prayer. Speak, if your heart prompts, in articulate words, but there is an unsyllabled wish, which is also prayer. You cannot help praying, if God's spirit is in yours.

Do not say I must wait till this tumult has subsided and I am calm. The worst storm of spirit is the time for prayer: the Agony was the hour of petition. Do not stop to calculate improbabilities. Prayer is truest when there is most of instinct and least of reason. Say, "My Father, thus I fear and thus I wish. Hear thy foolish, erring child—Let this cup pass from me."

II. Erroneous notions of what prayer is. They are contained in that conception which He negatived, "As I will."

A common popular conception of prayer is, that it is the means by which the wish of man determines the Will of God. This conception finds an exact parallel in those anecdotes with which Oriental history abounds, wherein a sovereign gives to his favourite some token, on the presentation of which every request must be granted. As when Ahasuerus promised Queen Esther that her petition should be granted, even to the half of his kingdom. As when Herod swore to Herodias' daughter that he would do whatever she should require. It will scarcely be said that this is a misrepre-

sentation of a very common doctrine, for they who hold it would state it thus, and would consider the mercifulness and privilege of prayer to consist in this, that by faith we can obtain all that we want.

Now in the text it is said distinctly this is not the aim of prayer, nor its meaning. "*Not* as I will." The wish of man does not determine the Will of God.

Try this conception by four tests.

1. By its incompatibility with the fact that this universe is a system of laws. Things are thus, rather than thus. Such an event is invariably followed by such a consequence. This we call a law. All is one vast chain, from which if you strike a single link, you break the whole. It has been truly said that to heave a pebble on the sea-shore one yard higher up would change all antecedents from the creation, and all consequents to the end of time. For it would have required a greater force in the wave that threw it there—and that would have required a different degree of strength in the storm—that again, a change of temperature all over the globe—that, again, a corresponding difference in the temperaments and characters of the men inhabiting the different countries.

So that when a child wishes a fine day for his morrow's excursion, and hopes to have it by an alteration of what would have been without his wish, he desires nothing less than a whole new universe.

It is difficult to state this in all its force except to men who are professionally concerned with the daily observation of the uniformity of the Divine laws. But when the Astronomer descends from his serene gaze upon the moving heavens, and the Chemist rises from contemplating those marvellous affinities, the proportions of which are never altered, realizing the fact that every atom and element has its own mystic number in the universe to the end of time; or when the Economist has studied the laws of wealth, and seen how fixed they are and sure: then to hear that it is expected that, to comply with a mortal's convenience or plans, God shall place this whole harmonious system at the

disposal of selfish Humanity, seems little else than impiety against the Lord of Law and Order.

2. Try it next by fact.

Ask those of spiritual experience. We do not ask whether prayer has been efficacious—of course it has. It is God's ordinance. Without prayer the soul dies. But what we ask is, whether the good derived has been exactly this, that prayer brought them the very thing they wished for? For instance, did the plague come and go according to the laws of prayer or according to the laws of health? Did it come because men neglected prayer, or because they disobeyed those rules which His wisdom has revealed as the conditions of salubrity? And when it departed was it because a nation lay prostrate in sackcloth and ashes, or because it arose and girded up its loins and removed those causes and those obstructions which, by everlasting Law, are causes and obstructions? Did the catarrh or the consumption go from him who prayed, sooner than from him who humbly bore it in silence? Try it by the case of Christ—Christ's prayer did not succeed. He prayed that the cup might pass from Him. It did not so pass.

Now lay down the irrefragable principle, "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." What Christ's prayer was not efficacious to do, that ours is not certain to effect. If the object of petition be to obtain, then Christ's prayer failed; if the refusal of His petition did not show the absence of the favour of His Father, then neither does the refusal of ours.

Nor can you meet this by saying, "His prayer could not succeed, because it was decreed that Christ should die; but ours may, because nothing hangs on our fate, and we know of no decree that is against our wish."

Do you mean that some things are decreed and some are left to chance? That would make a strange, disconnected universe. The death of a worm, your death, its hour and moment, are all fixed, as much as His was. Fortuity,

chance, contingency, are only words which express our ignorance of causes.

3. Try it by the prejudicial results of such a belief.

To think that prayer changes God's will, gives unworthy ideas of God. It supposes our will to be better than His, the Unchangeable, the Unsearchable, the All-Wise. Can you see the All of things—the consequences and secret connections of the event you wish? and if not, would you really desire the terrible power of infallibly securing it?

Consider also the danger of vanity and supineness resulting from the fulfilment of our desires as a necessity. Who does not recollect such cases in childhood, when some curious coincidences with our wishes were taken for direct replies to prayer, and made us fancy ourselves favourites of heaven, in possession of a secret spell. These coincidences did not make us more earnest, more holy, but rather the reverse. Careless and vain, we fancied we had a power which superseded exertion, we looked down contemptuously on others. Those were startling and wholesome lessons which came when our prayer failed, and threw our whole childish theory into confusion. It is recorded that a favourite once received from his sovereign a ring as a mark of her regard, with a promise that whenever he presented that ring to her she would grant his request. He entered on rebellion, from a vain confidence in the favour of his sovereign. The ring which he sent was kept back by his messenger, and he was executed. So would we rebel if prayer were efficacious to change God's will and to secure His pardon.

4. It would be most dangerous too, as a criterion of our spiritual state. If we think that answered prayer is a proof of grace, we shall be unreasonably depressed and unreasonably elated—depressed when we do not get what we wish, elated when we do; besides, we shall judge uncharitably of other men.

Two farmers pray, the one whose farm is on light land, for rain; the other, whose contiguous farm is on heavy soil, for fine weather; plainly one or the other must come, and

that which is good for one may be injurious to the other. If this be the right view of prayer, then the one who does not obtain his wish must mourn, doubting God's favour, or believing that he did not pray in faith. Two Christian armies meet for battle—Christian men on both sides pray for success to their own arms. Now if victory be given to prayer, independent of other considerations, we are driven to the pernicious principle, that success is the test of Right.

From all which the history of this prayer of Christ delivers us. It is a precious lesson of the Cross, that apparent failure is Eternal victory. It is a precious lesson of this prayer, that the object of prayer is not the success of its petition; nor is its rejection a proof of failure. Christ's petition was not gratified, yet He was the One well-beloved of His Father.

III. The true efficacy of prayer—"As Thou wilt."

All prayer is to change the will human into submission to the will Divine. Trace the steps in this history by which the mind of the Son of Man arrived at this result. First, we find the human wish almost unmodified, that "That cup might pass from Him." Then He goes to the disciples, and it would appear that the sight of those disciples, cold, unsympathetic, asleep, chilled His spirit, and set that train of thought in motion which suggested the idea that perhaps the passing of that cup was not His Father's will. At all events He goes back with this perhaps, "*If* this cup may not pass from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done." He goes back again, and the words become more strong: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." The last time He comes, all hesitancy is gone. Not one trace of the human wish remains; strong in submission, He goes to meet His doom—"Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me." This, then, is the true course and history of prayer. Hence we conclude,—

1. That prayer which does not succeed in moderating our wish, in changing the passionate desire into still submission,

the anxious, tumultuous expectation into silent surrender, is no true prayer, and proves that we have not the spirit of true prayer.

Hence, too, we learn—

2. That life is most holy in which there is least of petition and desire, and most of waiting upon God: that in which petition most often passes into thanksgiving. In the prayer taught by Christ there is only one petition for personal good, and that a singularly simple and modest one, "Give us this day our daily bread," and even that expresses dependence far rather than anxiety or desire.

From this we understand the spirit of that retirement for prayer, into lonely tops of mountains and deep shades of night, of which we read so often in His life. It was not so much to secure any definite event as from the need of holy communion with His Father—prayer without any definite wish; for we must distinguish two things which are often confounded. Prayer for specific blessings is a very different thing from communion with God. Prayer is one thing, petition is quite another. Indeed, hints are given us which make it seem that a time will come when spirituality shall be so complete, and acquiescence in the Will of God so entire, that petition shall be superseded. "In that day ye shall ask Me nothing." "Again I say not I will pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." And to the same purpose are all those passages in which He discountenances the Heathen idea of prayer, which consists in urging, prevailing upon God. "They think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him."

Practically then, I say, pray as He did, till prayer makes you cease to pray. Pray till prayer makes you forget your own wish, and leave it or merge it in God's Will. The Divine wisdom has given us prayer, not as a means whereby to obtain the good things of earth, but as a means whereby we learn to do without them; not as a means whereby we escape evil, but as a means whereby we become strong to

meet it. "There appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." That was the true reply to His prayer.

And so, in the expectation of impending danger, our prayer has won the victory, not when we have warded off the trial, but when, like Him, we have learned to say, "Arise, let us go to meet the evil."

Now contrast the moral consequences of this view of prayer with those which, as we saw, arise from the other view. Hence comes that mistrust of our own understanding which will not suffer us to dictate to God. Hence, that benevolence which, contemplating the good of the whole rather than self-interest, dreads to secure what is pleasing to self at the possible expense of the general weal. Hence, that humility which looks on ourselves as atoms, links in a mysterious chain, and shrinks from the dangerous wish to break the chain. Hence, lastly, the certainty that the All-wise is the All-good, and that "all things work together for good," for the individual as well as for the whole. Then, the selfish cry of egotism being silenced, we obtain Job's sublime spirit, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

There is one objection may be made to this. It may be said, if this be prayer, I have lost all I prized. It is sad and depressing to think that prayer will alter nothing, and bring nothing that I wish. All that was precious in prayer is struck away from me.

But one word in reply. You have lost the certainty of getting your own wish; you have got instead the compensation of knowing that the best possible, best for you, best for all, will be accomplished. Is that nothing? and will you dare to say that prayer is no boon at all unless you can reverse the spirit of your Master's prayer, and say, "Not as *Thou* wilt, but as *I* will?"

GOD'S REVELATION OF HEAVEN

1 CORINTHIANS ii. 9, 10.—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."

THE preaching of the Apostle Paul was rejected by numbers in the cultivated town of Corinth. It was not wise enough, nor eloquent enough, nor was it sustained by miracles. The man of taste found it barbarous: the Jew missed the signs and wonders which he looked for in a new dispensation: and the rhetorician missed the convincing arguments of the schools. To all which the apostle was content to reply, that his judges were incompetent to try the question. The princes of this world might judge in a matter of politics: the leaders in the world of literature were qualified to pronounce on a point of taste: the counsellors of this world to weigh an amount of evidence.—But in matters spiritual—they were as unfit to judge as a man without ear is to decide respecting harmony; or a man judging alone by sensation to supersede the higher truth of science by an appeal to his own estimate of appearances. The world, to sense, seems stationary. To the eye of Reason it moves with lightning speed; and the cultivation of reason alone can qualify for an opinion on the matter. The judgment of the senses is worth nothing in such matters. For every kind of truth a special capacity or preparation is indispensable.

For a revelation of spiritual facts two things are needed:—First, a Divine Truth; next, a spirit which can receive it.

Therefore the apostle's whole defence resolved itself into this: The natural man receiveth not the things which are of the Spirit of God. The world by wisdom knew not God. And his vindication of his teaching was—These

Revealed Truths cannot be seen by the eye, heard by the ear, nor guessed by the heart: they are visible, audible, imaginable, only to the spirit. By the spiritually prepared, they are recognised as beautiful, though they be folly to all the world beside,—as his Master had said before him, "Wisdom is justified by her children." In whatever type of life she might be exhibited, whether in the austere Man of the Desert, or in the higher type of the social life of Christ, the Children of Wisdom recognised her lineaments, justified and loved her—She was felt by *them*.

Two things are contained in this verse:—

I. The inability of the lower parts of human nature—the natural man—to apprehend the higher truths.

II. The Nature and Laws of Revelation.

I. By the natural man is meant the lower faculties of man; and it is said of these that they cannot discover truth spiritual.

1. Eternal Truth is not perceived through sensation. "Eye hath not seen the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

There is a life of mere sensation. The degree of its enjoyment depends upon fineness of organization. The pleasures of sense arise from the vibration of a nerve, or the thrilling of a muscle—nothing higher.

The highest pleasure of sensation comes through the eye. She ranks above all the rest of the senses in dignity. He whose eye is so refined by discipline that he can repose with pleasure upon the serene outline of beautiful form, has reached the purest of the sensational raptures.

Now the Corinthians could appreciate this. Theirs was the land of Beauty. They read the apostle's letter, surrounded by the purest conceptions of art. In the orders of architecture, the most richly graceful of all columnar forms receives its name from Corinth. And yet it was to these men, living in the very midst of the chastely beautiful, upon whom the apostle emphatically urged,—"*Eye* hath not seen the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

Let us not depreciate what God has given. There is a rapture in gazing on this wondrous world. There is a joy in contemplating the manifold Forms in which the All Beautiful has concealed His essence,—the Living Garment in which the Invisible has robed His mysterious loveliness. In every aspect of nature there is joy; whether it be the purity of virgin morning, or the sombre grey of a day of clouds, or the solemn pomp and majesty of night; whether it be the chaste lines of the crystal, or the waving outline of distant hills, tremulously visible through dim vapours; the minute petals of the fringed daisy, or the overhanging form of mysterious forests. It is a pure delight to see.

But all this is bounded. The eye can only reach the finite Beautiful. It does not scan "the King in his beauty, nor the land that is very far off." The Kingdom, but not the King—something measured by inches, yards, and miles —not the land which is very far off in the Infinite.

Again, it is perishable beauty,—a sight to sadden rather than delight. Even while you gaze, and feel how fair it is, joy mingles with melancholy, from a consciousness that it all is fading—it is the transient, not the Eternal Loveliness for which our spirits pant.

Therefore, when He came into this world, who was the Truth and the Life, in the body which God had prepared for Him, He came not in the glory of form: He was "a root out of a dry ground: He had no form nor comeliness;" when they saw Him, "there was no beauty that they should desire Him." The eye did not behold, even in Christ, the things which God had prepared.

Now observe, this is an Eternal Truth; true at all times —true now and for ever. In the quotation of this verse, a false impression is often evident. It is quoted as if the apostle by "the things prepared" meant heaven, and the glories of a world which is to be visible hereafter, but is at present unseen. This is manifestly alien from his purpose. The world of which he speaks is not a future, but a present Revelation. God *hath* revealed them. He speaks not of something to be manifested hereafter, but of something

already shown, only not to eye nor ear. The distinction lies between a kingdom which is appreciable by the senses, and another whose facts and truths are seen and heard only by the spirit. Never yet hath the eye seen the Truths of God—but then never shall it see them. In Heaven this shall be as true as now. Shape and colour give them not. God will never be visible—nor will His blessedness. He has no form. The pure in heart will see Him, but never with the eye; only in the same way, but in a different degree, that they see Him now. In the anticipated Vision of the Eternal, what do you expect to see? A shape? Hues? You will never behold God. Eye hath not seen, and never shall see in finite form, the Infinite One, nor the Infinite of feeling or of Truth.

Again—no scientific analysis can discover the Truths of God. Science cannot give a Revelation. Science proceeds upon observation. It submits everything to the experience of the senses. Its law, expounded by its great lawgiver, is, that if you would ascertain its truth you must see, feel, taste. Experiment is the test of truth. Now, you cannot, by searching, find out the Almighty to perfection, nor a single one of the blessed Truths He has to communicate.

Men have tried to demonstrate Eternal Life, from an examination of the structure of the body. One fancies he has discovered the seat of life in the pineal gland—another in the convolution of a nerve—and thence each infers the continuance of the mystic principle supposed to be discovered there. But a third comes, and sees in it all nothing really immaterial: organization, cerebration, but not Thought or Mind separable from these; nothing that must necessarily subsist after the organism has been destroyed.

Men have supposed they discovered the law of Deity written on the anatomical phenomena of disease. They have exhibited the brain inflamed by intoxication, and the structure obliterated by excess. They have shown in the disordered frame the inevitable penalty of transgression. But if a man, startled by all this, gives up his sin, has he from this selfish prudence learned the law of Duty? The

penalties of wrong-doing, doubtless: but not the sanction of Right and Wrong, written on the conscience, of which penalties are only the enforcements. He has indisputable evidence that it is expedient not to commit excess; but you cannot manufacture a conscience out of expediency: the voice of conscience says not, It is better not to do so, but "Thou shalt not."

No: it is in vain that we ransack the world for probable evidences of God and hypotheses of His existence. It is idle to look into the materialism of man for the Revelation of his immortality; or to examine the morbid anatomy of the body to find the rule of Right. If a man go to the eternal world with convictions of Eternity, the Resurrection, God, already in his spirit, he will find abundant corroborations of that which he already believes. But if God's existence be not thrilling every fibre of his heart, if the Immortal be not already in him as the proof of the Resurrection, if the law of Duty be not stamped upon his soul as an Eternal Truth, unquestionable, a thing that must be obeyed, quite separately from all considerations of punishment or impunity, science will never reveal these—observation pries in vain—the physician comes away from the laboratory an infidel. Eye hath not seen the truths which are clear enough to Love and to the Spirit.

2. Eternal truth is not reached by hearsay—"Ear hath not heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

No Revelation can be adequately given by the address of man to man, whether by writing or orally, even if he be put in possession of the truth itself. For all such revelation must be made through words: and words are but counters—the coins of intellectual exchange. There is as little resemblance between the silver coin and the bread it purchases, as between the word and the thing it stands for. Looking at the coin, the form of the loaf does not suggest itself. Listening to the word, you do not perceive the idea for which it stands, unless you are already in possession of it. Speak of ice to an inhabitant of the torrid zone, the

word does not give him an idea, or if it does, it must be a false one. Talk of blueness to one who cannot distinguish colours, what can your most eloquent description present to him resembling the truth of your sensation? Similarly in matters spiritual, no verbal revelation can give a single simple idea. For instance, what means justice to the unjust—or purity to the man whose heart is steeped in licentiousness? What does infinitude mean to a being who has never stirred from infancy beyond a cell, never seen the sky, or the sea, or any of those *occasions* of thought which, leaving vagueness on the mind, suggest the idea of the illimitable? It means, explain it as you will, nothing to him but a room: vastly larger than his own, but still a room, terminated by a wall. Talk of God to a thousand ears, each has his own different conception. Each man in this congregation has a God before him at this moment, who is, according to his own attainment in goodness, more or less limited and imperfect. The sensual man hears of God, and understands one thing. The pure man hears, and conceives another thing. Whether you speak in metaphysical or metaphorical language, in the purest words of inspiration, or the grossest images of materialism, the conceptions conveyed by the same word are essentially different, according to the soul which receives them.

So that apostles themselves, and prophets, speaking to the ear, cannot reveal truth to the soul—no not if God Himself were to touch their lips with fire. A verbal revelation is only a revelation to the ear.

Now see what a hearsay religion is. There are men who believe on authority. Their minister believes all this Christianity true: therefore so do they. He calls this doctrine essential: they echo it. Some thousands of years ago, men communed with God: they have heard this and are content it should be so. They have heard with the hearing of the ear, that God is Love—that the ways of holiness are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths peace. But a hearsay belief saves not. The Corinthian philosophers heard Paul—Pharisees heard Christ. How much did the

ear convey? To thousands exactly nothing. He believes truth who feels it. He has a religion whose soul knows by experience that to serve God and know Him is the richest treasure. And unless Truth come to you, not in word only, but in power besides—authoritative because true, not true because authoritative—there has been no real revelation made to you from God.

3. Truth is not discoverable by the heart—"neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

The heart—Two things we refer to this source: the power of imagining, and the power of loving.

Imagination is distinct from the mere dry faculty of reasoning. Imagination is creative—it is an immediate intuition; not a logical analysis—we call it popularly a kind of inspiration. Now imagination is a power of the heart:—Great thoughts originate from a large heart:—a man must have a heart, or he never could create.

It is a grand thing, when, in the stillness of the soul, thought bursts into flame, and the intuitive vision comes like an inspiration; when breathing thoughts clothe themselves in burning words, winged as it were with lightning—or when a great law of the universe reveals itself to the mind of genius, and where all was darkness, his single word bids Light be, and all is order where chaos and confusion were. Or when the truths of human nature shape themselves forth in the creative fancies of one like the myriad-minded Poet, and you recognise the rare power of *heart* which sympathizes with, and can reproduce all that is found in man.

But all this is nothing more than what the material man can achieve. The most ethereal creations of fantastic fancy were shaped by a mind that could read the life of Christ, and then blaspheme the Adorable. The truest utterances, and some of the deepest ever spoken, revealing the unrest and the agony that lie hid in the heart of man, came from one whose life was from first to last selfish. The highest astronomer of this age, before whose clear eye Creation lay

revealed in all its perfect order, was one whose spirit refused to recognise the Cause of Causes. The mighty heart of Genius had failed to reach the things which God imparts to a humble spirit.

There is more in the heart of man—it has the power of affection. The highest moment known on earth by the merely natural, is that in which the mysterious union of heart with heart is felt. Call it friendship—love—what you will, that mystic blending of two souls in one, when self is lost and found again in the being of another; when, as it were, moving about in the darkness and loneliness of existence, we suddenly come in contact with something, and we find that spirit has touched spirit. This is the purest, serenest ecstasy of the merely human—more blessed than any sight that can be presented to the eye, or any sound that can be given to the ear: more sublime than the sublimest dream ever conceived by genius in its most gifted hour, when the freest way was given to the shaping spirit of imagination.

This has entered into the heart of man, yet this is of the lower still. It attains not to the things prepared by God—it dimly shadows them. Human love is but the faint type of that surpassing blessedness which belongs to those who love God.

II. We pass therefore to the Nature and Laws of Revelation.

First, Revelation is made by a Spirit to a spirit—"God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit." Christ is the voice of God *without* the man—the Spirit is the voice of God *within* the man. The highest Revelation is not made by Christ, but comes directly from the universal Mind to our minds. Therefore, Christ said Himself, He, the Spirit, shall take of mine and shall show it unto you. And therefore it is written here—The *Spirit* searches all things, yea the deep things of God.

Now the Spirit of God lies touching, as it were, the soul of man—Ever around and near. On the outside of earth,

man stands with the boundless heaven above him: nothing between him and space—space around him and above him—the confines of the sky touching him. So is the spirit of man to the Spirit of the Ever Near. They mingle—in every man this is true. The spiritual in him, by which he might become a recipient of God, may be dulled, deadened, by a life of sense, but in this world never lost. All men are not spiritual men; but all have spiritual sensibilities which might awake. All that is wanted is to become conscious of the nearness of God. God has placed men here to feel after Him if haply they may find Him, albeit *He be not far* from any of them. Our souls float in the immeasurable ocean of spirit. God lies around us: at any moment we might be conscious of the contact.

The *condition* upon which this Self-Revelation of the Spirit is made to man, is Love. These things are "prepared for them that love Him," or, which is the same thing, revealed to those who have the mind of Christ.

Let us look into this word Love. Love to man may mean several things. It may mean love to his person, which is very different from himself—or it may mean simply pity. Love to God can only mean one thing—God is a Character. To love God is to love His character. For instance—God is Purity. And to be pure in thought and look; to turn away from unhallowed books and conversation, to abhor the moments in which we have not been pure, is to love God.

God is Love—and to love men till private attachments have expanded into a philanthropy which embraces all—at last even the evil and enemies with compassion—that is to love God. God is Truth. To be true—to hate every form of falsehood—to live a brave—true—real life—that is to love God. God is Infinite—and to love the boundless, reaching on from grace to grace, adding charity to faith, and rising upwards ever to see the Ideal still above us, and to die with it unattained, aiming insatiably to be perfect even as the Father is perfect—that is love to God.

This Love is manifested in obedience—Love is the life of which obedience is the Form. "He that hath My

commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me. . . . He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings." Now here can be no mistake. Nothing can be love to God which does not shape itself into obedience. We remember the anecdote of the Roman commander who forbade an engagement with the enemy, and the first transgressor against whose prohibition was his own son. He accepted the challenge of the leader of the other host, met, slew, spoiled him, and then in triumphant feeling carried the spoils to his father's tent. But the Roman father refused to recognise the instinct which prompted this as deserving of the name of Love—Disobedience contradicted it, and deserved death:—weak sentiment, what was it worth?

So with God:—strong feelings, warm expressions, varied internal experience co-existing with disobedience, God counts not as Love. Mere weak feeling may not usurp that sacred name.

To this Love, adoring and obedient, God reveals His Truth—For such as Love it is prepared: or rather, by the well-known Hebrew inversion, such are prepared for it.—Love is the condition without which revelation does not take place. As in the natural, so in the spiritual world:—By compliance with the laws of the universe, we put ourselves in possession of its blessings.—Obey the laws of health and you obtain health:—Temperance, sufficiency of light and air, and exercise, these are the conditions of health. Arm yourselves with the laws of nature, and you may call down the lightning from the sky;—surround yourself with glass, and the lightning may play innocuously a few inches from you—It cannot touch you—you may defy it—you have obeyed the conditions of nature, and nature is on your side against it.

In the same way, there are conditions in the world of Spirit, by compliance with which God's Spirit comes into the soul with all its Revelations, as surely as lightning from the sky, and as invariably:—such conditions as these. "The secret of the Lord is with them that *fear* Him."

"No man hath seen God any time." "If we *love* one another, God dwelleth in us." "With this man will I dwell, even with him that is of a *meek* and *contrite* spirit." If any man will *do* His will, he shall know of the doctrine —Reverence, love, meekness, contrition, obedience,—these conditions having taken place, God enters into the soul, whispers His secret, becomes visible, imparts knowledge and conviction.

Now these laws are universal and invariable:—They are subject to no caprice.—There is no favourite child of nature who may hold the fire-ball in the hollow of his hand and trifle with it without being burnt:—There is no selected child of Grace who can live an irregular life without unrest: or be proud, and at the same time have peace: or indolent, and receive fresh inspiration: or remain unloving and cold, and yet see and hear and feel the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

Therefore the apostle preached the Cross to men who felt, and to men who felt not the Revelation contained in it. The Cross is humbleness: love: self-surrender—These the apostle preached—To conquer the world by loving it —To be blest by ceasing the pursuit of happiness, and sacrificing life instead of finding it. To make a hard lot easy by submitting to it—This was his divine philosophy of life. And the princes of this world, amidst scoffs and laughter, replied, Is that all? Nothing to dazzle—nothing to captivate. But the disciples of the inward life recognized the Divine Truth which this doctrine of the Cross contained. The humble of heart, and the loving, felt that in this lay the mystery of life, of themselves, and of God, all revealed and plain. It was God's own wisdom, felt by those who had the mind of Christ.

The application of all this is very easy: Love God, and He will dwell with you:—Obey God, and He will reveal the truths of His deepest teaching to your soul. Not *perhaps*: —As surely as the laws of the spiritual world are irreversible, are these things prepared for obedient love:—An inspiration as true, as real, and as certain as that which

ever prophet or apostle reached, is yours, if you will have it so.

And if obedience were entire and love were perfect, then would the Revelation of the Spirit to the soul of man be perfect too. There would be trust expelling care, and enabling a man to repose:—There would be a love which would cast out fear:—There would be a sympathy with the mighty All of God:—selfishness would pass, Isolation would be felt no longer;—The tide of the universal and eternal Life would come with mighty pulsations throbbing through the soul. To such a man it would not matter where he was, nor what:—To live or die would be alike. If he lived, he would live unto the Lord; if he died, he would die to the Lord. The bed of down surrounded by friends, or the martyr's stake, girt round with curses—what matter which? Stephen, dragged, hurried, driven, felt the glory of God streaming on his face: when the shades of faintness were gathering round his eyes, and the world was fading away into indistinctness, "the things prepared" were given him. His spirit saw what "Eye had never seen." The later martyr bathes his fingers in the flames, and while the flesh shrivels and the bones are cindered, says, in unfeigned sincerity, that he is lying on a bed of roses. It would matter little what he was,—the ruler of a kingdom, or a tailor grimed with the smoke and dust of a workshop. To a soul filled with God, the difference between these two is inappreciable:—as if, from a distant star, you were to look down upon a palace and a hovel, both dwindled into distance, and were to smile at the thought of calling one large and the other small.

No matter to such a man what he saw or what he heard; for every sight would be resplendent with beauty, and every sound would echo harmony: Things common would become transfigured, as when the ecstatic state of the inward soul reflected a radiant cloud from the frame of Christ. The human would become Divine, life—even the meanest—noble. In the hue of every violet there would be a glimpse of Divine affection, and a dream of Heaven. The forest

would blaze with Deity, as it did to the eye of Moses. The creations of genius would breathe less of earth and more of Heaven. Human love itself would burn with a clearer and intenser flame, rising from the altar of self-sacrifice.

These are "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Compared with these, what are loveliness,—the eloquent utterances of man,—the conceptions of the heart of Genius? What are they all to the serene stillness of a spirit lost in Love: the full deep rapture of a soul into which the spirit of God is pouring itself in a mighty tide of Revelation?

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH A FAMILY

EPHESIANS iii. 14, 15.—"Our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named."

IN the verses immediately before the text the Apostle Paul has been speaking of what he calls a mystery—that is, a revealed secret. And the secret was this, that the Gentiles would be "fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ by the gospel." It had been kept secret from the former ages and generations; it was a secret which the Jew had not suspected, had not even dreamt of. It appeared to him to be his duty to keep as far as possible from the Gentile. Circumcision, which taught him the duty of separation from the Gentile spirit, and Gentile practices, seemed to him to teach hatred towards Gentile *persons*, until at length, in the good pleasure and providence of God, in the fulness of time, through the instrumentality of men whose *hearts* rather than whose intellects were inspired by God, the truth came out distinct and clear, that God was the Father of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, "for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. x. 12). In the progress of

the months, my Christian brethren, we have arrived again at that period of the year in which our Church calls upon us to commemorate the Epiphany, or manifestation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and we know not that in the whole range of Scripture we could find a passage which more distinctly and definitely than this brings before us the spirit in which it is incumbent upon us to enter upon this duty.

In considering this passage we shall divide it into these two branches:—1st, the definition which the Apostle Paul here gives of the Church of Christ; and, 2ndly, the Name by which this Church is named.

I. In the first place, let us consider the definition given by the Apostle Paul of the Christian Church, taken in its entirety. It is this, "the whole family in heaven and earth." But, in order to understand this fully, it will be necessary for us to break it up into its different terms.

1. First of all it is taught by this definition that the Church of Christ is a *society founded upon natural affinities* —a "family." A family is built on affinities which are natural, not artificial; it is not a combination, but a society. In ancient times an association of interest combined men in one guild or corporation for protecting the common persons in that corporation from oppression. In modern times identity of political creed or opinion has bound men together in one league, in order to establish those political principles which appeared to them of importance. Similarity of taste has united men together in what is called an association, or a society, in order by this means to attain more completely the ends of that science to which they had devoted themselves. But, as these have been raised artificially, so their end is, inevitably, dissolution. Society passes on, and guilds and corporations die; principles are established, and leagues become dissolved; tastes change, and then the association or society breaks up and comes to nothing. It is upon another principle altogether that that which we call a family, or true society, is formed. It is not

built upon similarity of taste, nor identity of opinion, but upon affinities of nature. You do not *choose* who shall be your brother; you cannot exclude your mother or your sister; it does not depend upon choice or arbitrary opinion at all, but is founded upon the eternal nature of things. And precisely in the same way is the Christian Church formed—upon natural affinity, and not upon artificial combination. "The family, the whole family in heaven and earth;" not made up of those who call themselves brethren, but of those who *are* brethren; not founded merely upon the principles of combination, but upon the principles of affinity. That is not a church, or a family, or a society which is made up by men's choice, as when in the upper classes of life, men of fashion unite together, selecting their associates from their own *class*, and form what is technically called a society; it is a combination if you will, but a society it is not—a family it is not—A Church of Christ it cannot be. And, again, when the Baptists or the Independents, or any other sectarians, unite themselves with men holding the same faith and entertaining the same opinions, there may be a *sect*, a *combination*, a *persuasion*, but a *Church* there cannot be. And so, again, when the Jew in time past linked himself with the Jew, with those of the same nation, there you have what in ancient times was called Judaism, and in modern times is called Hebraicism—a system, a combination, but not a Church. The Church rises ever out of the family. First of all in the good providence of God, there is the family, then the tribe, then the nation; and then the nation merges itself into humanity. And the nation which refuses to merge its nationality in Humanity, to lose itself in the general interests of mankind, is left behind, and loses almost its religious nationality—like the Jewish people.

Such is the first principle. A man is born of the same family, and is not made such by an appointment, or by arbitrary choice.

2. Another thing which is taught by this definition is this, that the Church of Christ is a whole made up of manifold

diversities. We are told here it is "the *whole* family," taking into it the great and good of ages past, now in heaven; and also the struggling, the humble, and the weak now existing upon earth. Here, again, the analogy holds good between the Church and the family. Never more than in the family is the true entirety of our nature seen. Observe how all the diversities of human condition and character manifest themselves in the family.

First of all, there are the two opposite poles of masculine and feminine, which contain within them the entire of our humanity—which together, not separately, make up the whole of man. Then there are the *diversities in the degrees and kinds of affection.* For, when we speak of family affection, we must remember that it is made up of many diversities. There is nothing more different than the love which the sister bears towards the brother, compared with that which the brother bears towards the sister. The affection which a man bears towards his father is quite distinct from that which he feels towards his mother; it is something quite different towards his sister; totally diverse again, towards his brother. And then there are *diversities of character.* First the mature wisdom and stern integrity of the father; then the exuberant tenderness of the mother. And then one is brave and enthusiastic, another thoughtful, and another tender. One is remarkable for being full of rich humour, another is sad, mournful, even melancholy. Again, besides these, there are *diversities of condition in life.* First, there is the heir, sustaining the name and honour of the family; then perchance the soldier, in whose career all the anxiety and solicitude of the family is centred; then the man of business, to whom they look up, trusting his advice, expecting his counsel; lastly, perhaps, there is the invalid, from the very cradle trembling between life and death, drawing out all the sympathies and anxieties of each member of the family, and so uniting them all more closely, from their having one common point of sympathy and solicitude. Now, you will observe that these are not accidental, but absolutely essential to the idea of a family; for so far as any

one of them is lost, so far the family is incomplete. A family made up of one sex alone, all brothers and no sisters; or in which all are devoted to one pursuit; or in which there is no diversity of temper and dispositions—the same monotonous repeated identity—a sameness in the type of character—this is not a family, it is only the fragment of a family.

And precisely in the same way all these diversities of character and condition are necessary to constitute and complete the idea of a Christian Church. For, as in ages past it was the delight of the Church to canonize one particular class of virtues—as, for instance, purity or martyrdom—so now, in every age, and in every individual bosom, there is a tendency to canonize, or honour, or reckon as Christian, only one or two classes of Christian qualities. For example, if you were to ask in the present day where you should find a type of the Christian character, many in all probability would point you to the man who keeps the Sabbath-day, is regular in his attendance upon the services of the Church, who loves to hear the Christian sermon. This is a phase of Christian character—that which is essentially and peculiarly the *feminine* type of religion. But is there in God's Church to be found no place for that type which is rather masculine than feminine?—which, not in litanies or in psalm-singing does the will of God, but by struggling for principles, and contending for the truth—*that* life whose prayer is action, whose aspiration is continual effort? Or again, in every age, amongst all men, in the history of almost every individual, at one time or another, there has been a tendency towards that which has been emphatically named in modern times *hero-worship*—leading us to an admiration of the more singular, powerful, noble qualities of humanity. And wherever this tendency to hero-worship exists there will be found side by side with it a tendency to undervalue and depreciate excellences of an opposite character—the humble, meek, retiring qualities. But it is precisely for these that the Church of Christ finds place. "Blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful, blessed are

they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, blessed are the poor in spirit." In God's world there is a place for the wren and the violet, just as truly as there is for the eagle and the rose. In the Church of God there is a place—and that the noblest—for Dorcas making garments for the poor, and for Mary sitting at the feet of Jesus, just as truly as there is for Elijah confounding a false religion by his noble opposition; for John the Baptist making a king tremble on his throne; or for the Apostle Paul "compassing sea and land" by his wisdom and his heroic deeds.

Once more, there are ages, as well as times in our own individual experience, when we set up charity as if it were the one only Christian character. And wherever this tendency is found there will be found at the same time, and side by side with it, a tendency to admire the spurious form of charity, which is a sentiment and not a virtue; which can sympathize with crime, but not with law; which can be tender to savages, but has no respect, no care, for national honour. And, therefore, does this principle of the Apostle Paul call upon us to esteem also another form or type of character, and the opposite one; that which is remarkable for—in which predominates—not so much charity as *justice;* that which was seen in the warriors and prophets of old; who, perchance, had a more strong recoil from vice than sympathy with virtue; whose indignation towards that which is wrong and hypocritical was more intense than their love for that which is good: the material, the character, out of which the reformer and the prophet, those who are called to do great works on earth, are made. The Church of Christ takes not in one individual form of goodness merely, but every form of excellence that can adorn humanity. Nor is this wonderful when we remember Who He was from whom this Church was named. It was He in whom centred all excellence—a righteousness which was entire and perfect. But when we speak of the perfection of righteousness let us remember that it is made not of one exaggerated character, but of a true harmony, a due proportion of all virtues united. In Him were found, therefore,

that tenderness towards sinners which had no sympathy with sin; that humility which could be dignified, and was yet united with self-respect; that simplicity which is ever to be met with, side by side with true majesty; that love which could weep over Jerusalem at the very moment when He was pronouncing its doom; that truth and justice which appeared to stand as a protection to those who had been oppressed, at the same time that He scathed with indignant invective the Pharisees of the then existing Jews.

There are two, only two, *perfect* humanities. One has existed already in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the other is to be found only in the collective Church. Once, only once, has God given a perfect representation of Himself, "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person." And if we ask again for a perfect humanity, the answer is, it is not in this Church or in that Church, or in this man or in that man, in this age or in that age, but in the collective blended graces and beauties, and humanities which are found in every age, in all churches, but not in every separate man. So, at least, Paul has taught us, "Till we *all* come"—*collectively* not separately—"in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man"—in other words, to a perfect *humanity*—"unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

3. The last thing which is taught us by this definition is, that the Church of Christ is a society which is for ever shifting its locality, and altering its forms. It is the *whole* church, "the *whole* family in heaven and earth." So, then, those who were on earth, and are now in heaven, are yet members of the same family still. Those who had their home here, now have it there. Let us see what it is that we should learn from this doctrine. It is this, that the dead are not lost to us. There is a sense in which the departed are ours more than they were before. There is a sense in which the Apostles Paul, or John, the good and great of ages past, belong to this age more than to

that in which they lived, but in which they were not understood; in which the common-place and every-day part of their lives hindered the brightness and glory and beauty of their character from shining forth. So it is in the family. It is possible for men to live in the same house, and partake of the same meal from day to day, and from year to year, and yet remain strangers to each other, mistaking each other's feelings, not comprehending each other's character; and it is only when the Atlantic rolls between, and half a hemisphere is interposed, that we learn how dear they are to us, how all our life is bound up in deep anxiety with their existence. Therefore it is the Christian feels that the family is not broken. Think you that family can break or end?—that because the chair is empty, therefore he, your child, is no more? It may be so with the coarse, the selfish, the unbelieving, the superstitious; but the eye of faith sees there only a transformation. He is not there, he is risen. You see the place where he was, but he has passed to heaven. So at least the parental heart of David felt of old, "by faith and not by sight," when speaking of his infant child. "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Once more, the Church of Christ is a society ever altering and changing its external forms. "The *whole* family"—the Church of the Patriarchs, and of ages before them; and yet the same family. Remember, I pray you, the diversities of form through which, in so many ages and generations, this Church has passed. Consider the difference there was between the patriarchal Church of the time of Abraham and Isaac, and its condition under David; or the difference between the Church so existing and its state in the days of the apostles; and the marvellous difference between that and the same Church four or five centuries later; or, once again, the difference between that, externally one, and the Church as it exists in the present day, broken into so many fragments. Yet diversified as these states may be, they are not more so than the various stages of a family.

There is a time when the children are all in one room,

around their mother's knee. Then comes a time, still further on, when the first separation takes place, and some are leaving their home to prepare for after-life. Afterwards, *when* all in their different professions, trades, or occupations, are separate. At last comes the time when some are gone. And, perchance, the two survivors meet at last—an old, grey-haired man, and a weak, worn-out woman—to mourn over the last graves of a household. Christian brethren, which of these is the right form—the true, external pattern of a family? Say we not truly, it remains the same under all outward mutations? We must think of this, or else we may lose heart in our work. Conceive for instance, the feelings of a pious Jew, when Christianity entered this world; when all his religious system was broken up—the Temple service brought to a violent end; when that polity which he thought was to redeem and ennoble the world was cast aside as a broken and useless thing. Must they not have been as gloomy and as dreary as those of the disciples, when He was dead who they "trusted should have redeemed Israel?" In both cases the body was gone or was altered—the spirit had arisen.

And precisely so it is with our fears and unbelieving apprehensions now. Institutions pass—churches alter—old forms change—and high-minded and good men cling to these as if *they* were the only things by which God could regenerate the world. Christianity appears to some men to be effete and worn out. Men who can look back upon the times of Venn, and Newton, and Scott—comparing the degeneracy of their descendants with the men of those days—lose heart, as if all things were going wrong. "Things are not," they say, "as they were in our younger days." No, my Christian brethren, things are not as they then were; but the Christian cause lives on—not in the successors of such men as those; the outward form is altered, but the spirit is elsewhere, is risen—risen just as truly as the spirit of the highest Judaism rose again in Christianity. And to mourn over old superstitions and effete creeds, is just as unwise as is the grief of the mother mourning over

the form which was once her child. She cannot separate her affection from that form—those hands, those limbs, those features—are they not her child? The true answer is, her child is not there. It is only the form of her child. And it is as unwise to mourn over the decay of those institutions—the change of human forms – as it was unwise in Jonah to mourn with that passionate sorrow over the decay of the gourd which had sheltered him from the heat of the noontide sun. A worm had eaten the root of the gourd, and it was gone. But he who made the gourd the shelter to the weary—the shadow of those who are oppressed by the noontide heat of life—lived on: Jonah's God. And so, brethren, all things change—all things outward change and alter; but the God of the Church lives on. The Church of God remains under fresh forms—the one, holy, entire family in heaven and earth.

II. Pass we on now, in the second place, to consider the name by which this Church is named. "Our Lord Jesus Christ," the Apostle says, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

Now, every one familiar with the Jewish modes of thought and expression, will allow here, that *name* is but another word to express being, actuality, and existence. So when Jacob desired to know the character and nature of Jehovah, he said—"Tell me now, I beseech thee, Thy *name*." When the Apostle here says, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is *named*," it is but another way of saying that it is He on whom the Church depends—Who has given it substantive existence—without whom it could not be at all. It is but another way of saying what he has expressed elsewhere—"that there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we may be saved." Let us not lose ourselves in vague generalities. Separate from Christ, there is no salvation; there can be no Christianity. Now let us understand what we mean by this. Let us clearly define and enter into the meaning of the words we use. When we say that

our Lord Jesus Christ is He "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," we mean that the very being of the Church depends on Christ—that it could not be without Him. Now, the Church of Christ depends upon these three things—first, the recognition of a common Father; secondly, of a common humanity; and thirdly, of a common sacrifice.

1. First, the recognition of a common Father. That is the sacred truth proclaimed by the Epiphany. God revealed in Christ—not the Father of the Jew only, but also of the Gentile. The Father of a "*whole* family." Not the partial Father, loving one alone—the elder—but the younger son besides: the outcast prodigal who had spent his living with harlots and sinners, but the child still, and the child of a Father's love. Our Lord taught this in His own blessed prayer—"*Our* Father;" and as we lose the meaning of that single word *our*, as we say *my* Father—the Father of *me* and of *my* faction—of *me* and *my* fellow believers—*my* Anglicanism or *my* Judaism—be it what it may—instead of *our* Father—the Father of the outcast, the profligate, of all who choose to claim a Father's love; *so* we lose the meaning of the lesson which the Epiphany was designed to teach, and the possibility of building up a family to God.

2. The recognition of a common humanity. He from whom the Church is named, took upon Him not the nature merely of the noble, of kings, or of the intellectual philosopher—but of the beggar, the slave, the outcast, the infidel, the sinner, and the nature of every one struggling in various ways. Let us learn then, brother men, that we shall have no family in God, unless we learn the deep truth of our common humanity, shared in by the servant and the sinner, as well as the sovereign. Without this we shall have no Church—no family in God.

3. Lastly, the Church of Christ proceeds out of, and rests upon, the belief in a common Sacrifice. * *

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There are three ways in which the human race hitherto has endeavoured to construct itself into a family; first, by the sword; secondly, by an ecclesiastical system; and thirdly, by trade or commerce. First, by the sword. The Assyrian, the Persian, the Greek, and the Roman, have done their work—in itself, a most valuable and important one; but so far as the formation of mankind into a family was the object aimed at, the work of the sword has done almost nothing. Then there was the ecclesiastical system—the grand attempt of the Church of Rome to organize all men into one family, with one ecclesiastical, visible, earthly head. Being Protestants, it is not necessary for us to state our conviction that this attempt has been a signal and complete failure. We now come to the system of commerce and trade. We are told that that which chivalry and honour could not do—which an ecclesiastical system could not do—personal interest *will* do. Trade is to bind men together into one family. When they feel it their *interest* to be one, they will be brothers. Brethren, that which is built on selfishness cannot stand. The system of personal interest must be shivered into atoms. Therefore, we, who have observed the ways of God in the past, are waiting in quiet but awful expectation until He shall confound this system as He has confounded those which have gone before. And it may be effected by convulsions more terrible and more bloody than the world has yet seen. While men are talking of peace, and of the great progress of civilization, there is heard in the distance the noise of armies gathering rank on rank: east and west, north and south, are rolling towards us the crushing thunders of universal war.

Therefore, there is but one other system to be tried, and that is the Cross of Christ—a system that is not to be built upon selfishness, nor upon blood, nor upon personal interest, but upon Love. Love, not self—the Cross of Christ, and not the mere working-out of the ideas of individual humanity.

One word only, in conclusion. Upon this, the great truth of the Epiphany, the Apostle founds a prayer. He prays, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." This manifestation of joy and good to the Gentiles was, according to him, the great mystery of Love. A Love, brighter, deeper, wider, higher than the largest human heart had ever yet dreamed of. But the Apostle tells us it is after all, but a glimpse of the love of God. How should we learn it more? How should we comprehend the whole meaning of the Epiphany? By sitting down to read works of theology? The Apostle Paul tells us—No. You must love, in order to understand love. "That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." Brother men, one act of charity will teach us more of the love of God than a thousand sermons—one act of unselfishness, of real self-denial, the putting forth one loving feeling to the outcast and "those who are out of the way," will tell us more of the meaning of the Epiphany than whole volumes of the wisest writers on theology.

THE SHADOW AND THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SABBATH

Col. ii. 16, 17.—"Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

No sophistry of criticism can explain away the obvious meaning of these words. The apostle speaks of certain institutions as Jewish: shadowy: typical: and among these

we are surprised to find the sabbath-days. It has been contended that there is here no allusion to the seventh day of rest, but only to certain Jewish holidays, not of Divine institution. But, in the first place, the "holidays" have been already named in the same verse; in the next we are convinced that no plain man, reading this verse for the first time, without a doctrine to support, would have put such an interpretation upon the word: and we may be sure that St. Paul would never have risked so certain a misconstruction of his words by the use of an ambiguous phrase. This, then, is the first thing we lay down—a very simple postulate, one would think—when the apostle says the sabbath-days, he means the sabbath-days.

Peculiar difficulties attend the discussion of the subject of the sabbath. If we take the strict and ultra ground of sabbath observance, basing it on the rigorous requirements of the fourth commandment, we take ground which is not true; and all untruth, whether it be an over-statement or a half-truth, recoils upon itself. If we impose on men a burden which cannot be borne, and demand a strictness which, possible in theory, is impossible in practice, men recoil; we have asked too much, and they give us nothing—the result is an open, wanton, and sarcastic desecration of the Day of Rest.

If, on the other hand, we state the truth, that the sabbath is obsolete—a shadow which has passed—without modification or explanations, evidently there is a danger no less perilous. It is true to spiritual, false to unspiritual men; and a wide door is opened for abuse. And to recklessly loosen the hold of a nation on the sanctity of the Lord's Day would be most mischievous—to do so wilfully would be an act almost diabolical. For if we must choose between Puritan over-precision on the one hand, and on the other that laxity which, in many parts of the Continent, has marked the day from other days only by more riotous worldliness, and a more entire abandonment of the whole community to amusement, no Christian would hesitate: no English Christian at least; to whom that day is hallowed by

all that is endearing in early associations, and who feels how much it is the very bulwark of his country's moral purity.

Here, however, as in other cases, it is the half-truth which is dangerous—the other half is the corrective; the whole truth alone is safe. If we say the sabbath is shadow, this is only half the truth. The apostle adds, "the body is of Christ."

There is, then, in the sabbath that which is shadowy and that which is substantial; that which is transient and that which is permanent; that which is temporal and typical, and that which is eternal. The shadow and the body. Hence, a very natural and simple division of our subject suggests itself.

I. The transient shadow of the sabbath which has passed away.

II. The permanent substance which cannot pass.

I. The transient shadow which has passed away.

The history of the sabbath-day is this. It was given by Moses to the Israelites, partly as a sign between God and them, marking them off from all other nations by its observance; partly as commemorative of their deliverance from Egypt. And the reason why the seventh day was fixed on, rather than the sixth or eighth was, that on that day God rested from His labour. The soul of man was to form itself on the model of the Spirit of God. It is not said, that God at the creation gave the sabbath to man, but that God rested at the close of the six days of creation: whereupon he had blessed and sanctified the seventh day to the Israelites. This is stated in the fourth commandment, and also in Gen. i., which was written for the Israelites; and the history of creation naturally and appropriately introduces the reason and the sanction of their day of rest.

Nor is there in the Old Testament a single trace of the observance of the sabbath before the time of Moses. After the Deluge, it is not mentioned in the covenant made with Noah. The first account of it occurs after the Israelites had left Egypt; and the fourth commandment consolidates it

into a law, and explains the principle and sanctions of the institution.

The observance of one day in seven, therefore, is purely Jewish. The Jewish obligation to observe it rested on the enactment given by Moses.

The spirit of its observance, too, is Jewish, and not Christian. There is a difference between the spirit of Judaism and that of Christianity. The spirit of Judaism is separation—that of Christianity is permeation. To separate the evil from the good was the aim and work of Judaism :—to sever one nation from all other nations ; certain meats from other meat ; certain days from other days. Sanctify means to set apart. The very essence of the idea of Hebrew holiness lay in sanctification in the sense of separation.

On the contrary, Christianity is permeation—it permeates all evil with good—it aims at overcoming evil by good—it desires to transfuse the spirit of the day of rest into all other days, and to spread the holiness of one nation over all the world. To saturate life with God, and the world with heaven, that is the genius of Christianity.

Accordingly, the observance of the sabbath was entirely in the Jewish spirit. No fire was permitted to be made on pain of death : Exod. xxxv. 3. No food was to be prepared : xvi. 5, 23. No buying nor selling : Nehem. x. 31. So rigorously was all this carried out, that a man gathering sticks was arraigned before the congregation, and sentenced to death by Moses.

This is Jewish, typical, shadowy ;—it is all to pass away. Much already has passed : even those who believe our Lord's day to be the descendant of the sabbath admit this. The day is changed. The first day of the week has taken the place of the seventh. The computation of hours is altered. The Jews reckoned from sunset to sunset—modern Christians reckon from midnight to midnight. The spirit of its observance, too, is altered. No one contends now for Jewish strictness in its details.

Now, observe, all this implies the abrogation of a great deal more—nay, of the whole Jewish sabbath itself. We

have altered the day—the computation of the hours—the mode of observance: What remains to keep? Absolutely nothing of the literal portion except one day in seven: and that is abrogated, if the rest be abrogated. For by what right do we say that the order of the day, whether it be the first or the seventh, is a matter of indifference, because only formal, but that the proportion of days, one in seven, instead of one in eight or nine, is moral, and unalterable? On what intelligible principle do we produce the fourth commandment as binding upon Christians, and abrogate so important a clause of it as, "In it thou shalt do *no manner of work*"? On what self-evident ground is it shown that the Jew might not light a fire, but the Christian may; yet that if the postal arrangements of a country permit the delivery of a letter, it is an infraction of the sabbath?

Unquestionably on no scriptural authority. Let those who demand a strict observance of the letter of scripture remember that the Jewish sabbath is distinctly enforced in the Bible, and nowhere in the Bible repealed. You have changed the seventh day to the first on no clear scriptural permission. Two or three passages tell us that, after the resurrection, the apostles were found together on the first day of the week (which, by the way, may have been Saturday evening after sunset). But it is concluded that therefore *probably* the change was apostolic. You have only a probability to go on—and that probability, except with the aid of tradition, infinitesimally small—for the abrogation of a single iota of the Jewish fourth commandment.

It will be said, however, that works of necessity and works of mercy are excepted by Christ's example.

Tell us, then, ye who are servants of the letter, and yet do not scruple to use a carriage to convey you to some church where a favourite minister is heard, is that a spiritual necessity or a spiritual luxury? Part of the Sunday meal of all of you is the result of a servant's work. Tell us, then, ye accurate logicians, who say that nothing escapes the rigour of the prohibition which is not necessary or merciful,

Is a hot repast a work of necessity or a work of mercy? Oh! it rouses in every true soul a deep and earnest indignation to hear men who drive their cattle to church on Sundays, because they are too emasculated to trudge through cold and rain on foot, invoke the severity of an insulted Law of the Decalogue on those who provide facilities of movement for such as cannot afford the luxury of a carriage. What, think you, would He who blighted the Pharisees with such burning words, have said, had He been present by, while men, whose servants clean their houses, and prepare their meals, and harness their horses, stand up to denounce the service on some railway by which the poor are helped to health and enjoyment? Hired service for the rich is a necessity—hired service for the poor is a desecration of the sabbath! It is right that a thousand should toil for the few in private! It is past bearing in a Christian country that a few should toil for thousands on the sabbath-day!

There is only this alternative: if the fourth commandment be binding still, that clause is unrepealed—"no manner of work;" and so, too, is that other important part, the sanctification of the seventh day and not the first. If the fourth commandment be not binding in these points, then there is nothing left but the broad, comprehensive ground taken by the apostle. The whole sabbath is a shadow of things to come. In consistency, either hold that none of the formal part is abrogated, or else all. The whole of the letter of the commandment is moral, or else none.

II. There is, however, in the sabbath a substance, a permanent something—"a body"—which cannot pass away.

"The body is of Christ;" the spirit of Christ is the fulfilment of the law. To have the spirit of Christ is to have fulfilled the law. Let us hear the mind of Christ in this matter.

"The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." In that principle, rightly understood, lies the

clue for the unravelling of the whole matter. The religionists of that day maintained that the necessities of man's nature must give way to the rigour of the enactment; He taught that the enactment must yield to man's necessities. They said that the sabbath was written in the book of the Law; He said that it was written on man's nature, and that the law was merely meant to be in accordance with that nature. They based the obligation to observe the sabbath on the sacredness of an enactment; He on the sacredness of the nature of man.

An illustration will help us to perceive the difference between these two views. A wise physician prescribes a regimen of diet to a palate which has become diseased: he fixes what shall be eaten, the quantity, the hours, and number of times. On what does the obligation to obey rest? On the arbitrary authority of the physician? or on the nature with which that prescription is in accordance? When soundness and health are restored, the prescription falls into disuse: but the nature remains unalterable, which has made some things nutritious, others unwholesome, and excess for ever pernicious. Thus the spirit of the prescription may be still in force when the prescriptive authority is repealed.

So Moses prescribed the sabbath to a nation spiritually diseased. He drew the regimen of rest to men who did not feel the need of spiritual rest. He fenced round his rule with precise regulations of detail—one day in seven, no work, no fire, no traffic. On what does the obligation to obey it rest? On the authority of the rule? or on the necessities of that nature for which the rule was divinely adapted? Was man made for the sabbath, to obey it as a slave? or, Was the sabbath made for man? And when spiritual health has been restored, the Law regulating the details of rest may become obsolete; but the nature which demands rest never can be reversed.

Observe, now, that this is a far grander, safer, and more permanent basis on which to rest the sabbath than the mere enactment. For if you allege the fourth commandment as

your authority, straightway you are met by the objection "no *manner* of work." Who gave you leave to alter that? And if you reply, works of necessity and works of mercy I may do, for Christ excepted these from the stringency of the rule, again the rejoinder comes, is there one in ten of the things that all Christians permit as lawful, really a matter of necessity?

Whereas, if the sabbath rest on the needs of human nature, and we accept His decision that the sabbath was made for *man*, then you have an eternal ground to rest on from which you cannot be shaken. A son of man may be lord of the sabbath-day, but he is not lord of his own nature. He cannot make one hair white or black. You may abrogate the formal Rule, but you cannot abrogate the needs of your own soul. Eternal as the constitution of the soul of man is the necessity for the existence of a day of rest. Further, still, on this ground alone can you find an impregnable defence of the *proportion*, one day in seven. On the other ground it is unsafe. Having altered the seventh to the first, I know not why one in seven might not be altered to one in ten. The thing, however, has been tried; and by the necessities of human nature the change has been found pernicious. One day in ten, prescribed by revolutionary France, was actually pronounced by physiologists insufficient. So that we begin to find that, in a deeper sense than we at first suspected, "the sabbath was made for man." Even in the contrivance of one day in seven, it was arranged by unerring wisdom. Just because the sabbath was made for man, and not because man was ordained to keep the sabbath-day, you cannot tamper even with the iota, one day in seven.

That necessity on which the observance leans is the need of Rest. It is the deepest want in the soul of man. If you take off covering after covering of the nature which wraps him round, till you come to the central heart of hearts, deep lodged there you find the requirement of Repose. All men do not hanker after pleasure—all men do not crave intellectual food. But all men long for rest; the most restless that ever pursued a turbulent career on earth did by that

career only testify to the need of the soul within. They craved for something which was not given: there was a thirst which was not slaked: that very restlessness betokened that—restless because not at rest. It is this need which sometimes makes the quiet of the grave an object of such deep desire. "There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest." It is this which creates the chief desirableness of Heaven: "There remaineth a rest for the people of God." And it is this which, consciously or unconsciously, is the real wish that lies at the bottom of all others. —Oh! for tranquillity of heart—Heaven's profound silence in the soul, "a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price!"

The rest needed by man is twofold. Physical repose of the body—a need which he shares with the animals, through the lower nature which he has in common with them. "Thou shalt do no work, nor thy cattle,"—so far man's sabbath-need places him only on a level with the ox and with the ass.

But, besides this, the rest demanded is a repose of spirit. Between these two kinds of rest there is a very important difference. Bodily repose is simply inaction: the rest of the soul is exercise, not torpor. To do nothing is physical rest —to be engaged in full activity is the rest of the soul.

In that hour, which of all the twenty-four is most emblematical of heaven, and suggestive of repose, the eventide, in which instinctively Jacob went into the fields to meditate—when the work of the day is done, when the mind has ceased its tension, when the passions are lulled to rest in spite of themselves, by the spell of the quiet star-lit sky,—it is then, amidst the silence of the lull of all the lower parts of our nature, that the soul comes forth to do its work. Then the peculiar, strange work of the soul, which the intellect cannot do—meditation, begins. Awe, and worship, and wonder are in full exercise; and Love begins then in its purest form of mystic adoration and pervasive and undefined tenderness—separate from all that is coarse and earthly—swelling as if it would embrace the All in its desire to bless

and lose itself in the sea of the love of God. This is the Rest of the soul—the *exercise* and play of all the nobler powers.

Two things are suggested by this thought.

First, the mode of the observance of the day of Rest. It has become lately a subject of very considerable attention. Physiologists have demonstrated the necessity of cessation from toil: they have urged the impossibility of perpetual occupation without end. Pictures, with much pathos in them, have been placed before us, describing the hard fate of those on whom no sabbath dawns. It has been demanded as a right, entreated as a mercy, on behalf of the labouring man, that he should have one day in seven for recreation of his bodily energies. All well and true. But there is a great deal more than this. He who confines his conception of the need of rest to that, has left man on a level with the brutes. Let a man take merely lax and liberal notions of the fourth commandment—let him give his household and dependents immunity from toil, and wish for himself and them no more, —he will find that there is a something wanting still. Experience tells us, after a trial, that those Sundays are the happiest, the purest, the most rich in blessing, in which the spiritual part has been most attended to;—those in which the business letter was put aside till evening, and the profane literature not opened, and the ordinary occupations entirely suspended;—those in which, as in the temple of Solomon, the sound of the earthly hammer has not been heard in the temple of the soul: for this is, in fact, the very distinction between the spirit of the Jewish sabbath and the spirit of the Christian Lord's day. The one is chiefly for the body—"Thou shalt do no manner of work." The other is principally for the soul—"I was in the spirit on the Lord's day."

The other truth suggested by that fact, that the repose of the soul is exercise, not rest, is, that it conveys an intimation of man's immortality. It is only when all the rest of our human nature is calmed that the spirit comes forth in full energy: all the rest tires, the spirit never tires. Hum-

bleness, awe, adoration, love, these have in them no weariness; so that when this frame shall be dissolved into the dust of the earth, and the mind, which is merely fitted for this time world, learning by experience, shall have been superseded, then, in the opening out of an endless career of love, the spirit will enter upon that sabbath of which all earthly sabbaths are but the shadow, the sabbath of Eternity, the immortal Rest of its Father's Home.

Two observations in concluding.

1. When is a son of man lord of the sabbath-day? To whom may the sabbath safely become a shadow? I reply, he that has the mind of Christ may exercise discretionary lordship over the sabbath-day. He who is in possession of the substance may let the shadow go. A man in health has done with the prescriptions of the physician. But for an unspiritual man to regulate his hours and amount of rest by his desires, is just as preposterous as for an unhealthy man to rule his appetites by his sensations. Win the mind of Christ—be like Him—and then, in the reality of Rest in God, the sabbath form of rest will be superseded. Remain apart from Christ, and then you are under the law again—the fourth commandment is as necessary for you as it was for the Israelite: the prescriptive regimen which may discipline your soul to a sounder state. It is at his peril that the worldly man departs from the *rule* of the day of rest. Nothing can make us free from the law but the Spirit.

2. The rule pronounced by the apostle is a rule of liberty, and at the same time a rule of charity: "Let no man judge you in respect of the sabbath-days." It is very difficult to discuss this question of the sabbath. Heat, vehemence, acrimony, are substituted for argument. When you calmly ask to investigate the subject, men apply epithets, and call them reasons:—they stigmatize you as a breaker of the sabbath, pronounce you "dangerous;" with sundry warnings against you in private, and pregnant hints in public.

The apostle urges charity: "One man esteemeth one day above another; another man esteemeth every day

alike." . . . . "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he regardeth it not." Carry out that spirit. In the detail of this question there is abundant difficulty. It is a question of degree. Some work must be done on the sabbath-day:—some must sacrifice their rest to the rest of others; for all human life is sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary.

Again, that which is rest to one man is not rest to another. To require the illiterate man to read his Bible for some hours would impose a toil upon him, though it might be a relaxation to you. To the labouring man a larger proportion of the day must be given to the recreation of his physical nature than is necessary for the man of leisure, to whom the spiritual observance of the day is easy, and seems all. Let us learn large, charitable considerateness. Let not the poor man sneer at his richer neighbour, if, in the exercise of his Christian liberty, he uses his horses to convey him to church and not to the mere drive of pleasure; but then, in fairness, let not the rich man be shocked and scandalized if the over-wearied shopkeeper and artisan breathe the fresh air of heaven with their families in the country. "The sabbath was made for man." Be generous, consistent, large minded. A man may hold stiff, precise Jewish notions on this subject; but do not stigmatize that man as a formalist. Another may hold large, Paul-like views of the abrogation of the fourth commandment, and yet he may be sincerely and zealously anxious for the hallowing of the day in his household and through his country. Do not call that man a sabbath-breaker. Remember, the Pharisees called the Son of God a sabbath-breaker. They kept the law of the sabbath—they broke the law of love. Which was the worst to break? which was the higher law to keep? Take care lest, in the zeal which seems to you to be for Christ, ye be found indulging their spirit, and not His.

THE SYDENHAM PALACE, AND THE RELIGIOUS NON-OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH

ROMANS xiv. 5, 6.—"One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."

THE selection of this text is suggested by one of the current topics of the day. Lately projects have been devised, one of which in importance surpasses all the rest, for providing places of public recreation for the people: and it has been announced, with the sanction of government, that such a place will be held open during a part at least of the day of rest. By a large section of sincerely religious persons this announcement has been received with considerable alarm, and strenuous opposition. It has seemed to them that such a desecration would be a national crime: for, holding the sabbath to be God's sign between Himself and His people, they cannot but view the desecration of the sign as a forfeiture of His covenant, and an act which will assuredly call down national judgments. By the secular press, on the contrary, this proposal has been defended with considerable power. It has been maintained that the sabbath is a Jewish institution; in its strictness, at all events, not binding on a Christian community. It has been urged with much force that we cannot consistently refuse to concede to the poor man publicly, that right of recreation which privately the rich man has long taken without rebuke, and with no protest on the part of the ministers of Christ. And it has been said, that such places of recreation will tend to humanize, which if not identical with Christianizing the population, is at least a step towards it.

Upon such a subject, where truth unquestionably does

not lie upon the surface, it cannot be out of place if a minister of Christ endeavours to direct the minds of his congregation towards the formation of an opinion; not dogmatically, but humbly remembering always that his own temptation is from his very position, as a clergyman, to view such matters, not so much in the broad light of the possibilities of actual life, as with the eyes of a recluse; from a clerical and ecclesiastical, rather than from a large and human point of view. For no minister of Christ has a right to speak oracularly. All that he can pretend to do is to give his judgment, as one that has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. And on large national subjects there is perhaps no class so ill qualified to form a judgment with breadth as we, the clergy of the Church of England, accustomed as we are to move in the narrow circle of those who listen to us with forbearance and deference, and mixing but little in real life, till in our cloistered and inviolable sanctuaries we are apt to forget that it is one thing to lay down rules for a religious clique, and another to legislate for a great nation.

In the Church of Rome a controversy had arisen in the time of St. Paul, respecting the exact relation in which Christianity stood to Judaism; and consequently, the obligation of various Jewish institutions came to be discussed: among the rest the sabbath-day. One party maintained its abrogation: another its continued obligation. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike." Now, it is remarkable that in his reply, the Apostle Paul, although his own views upon the question were decided and strong, passes no judgment of censure upon the practice of either of these parties, but only blames the uncharitable spirit in which the one "judged their brethren," as irreligious, and the other "set at nought" their stricter brethren as superstitious. He lays down, however, two principles for the decision of the matter: the first being the rights of Christian conviction, or the sacredness of the individual conscience—"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind;" the second, a principle unsatisfactory enough, and surprising, no doubt, to both, that there is such

a thing as a religious observance, and also such a thing as a religious non-observance of the day—"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."

I shall consider,

I. St Paul's own view upon the question.

II. His modifications of that view, in reference to separate cases.

I. St. Paul's own view.

No one, I believe, who would read St. Paul's own writings with unprejudiced mind could fail to come to the conclusion that he considered the sabbath abrogated by Christianity. Not merely as modified in its stringency, but totally repealed.

For example, see Col. ii. 16, 17: observe, he counts the Sabbath-day among those institutions of Judaism which were shadows, and of which Christ was the realization, the substance or "body;" and he bids the Colossians remain indifferent to the judgment which would be pronounced upon their non-observance of such days. "Let no man judge you with respect to . . . the sabbath-days."

He is more decisive still in the text. For it has been contended that in the former passage, "sabbath-days" refers simply to the Jewish sabbaths, which were superseded by the Lord's day; and that the apostle does not allude at all to the new institution, which it is supposed had superseded it. Here, however, there can be no such ambiguity. "One man esteemeth *every* day alike;" and he only says let him be fully persuaded in his own mind. "Every" day must include first days as well as last days of the week: Sundays as well as Saturdays.

And again, he even speaks of scrupulous adherence to particular days, as if it were giving up the very principle of Christianity: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." So that his objection was not to Jewish days, but to the very principle of attaching intrinsic

sacredness to any days. All forms and modes of particularizing the Christian life he reckoned as bondage under the element or alphabet of the law. And this is plain from the nature of the case. He struck not at a day, but at a principle. Else, if with all this vehemence and earnestness, he only meant to establish a new set of days in the place of the old, there is no intelligible principle for which he is contending, and that earnest apostle is only a champion for one day instead of another—an assertor of the eternal sanctities of Sunday, instead of the eternal sanctities of Saturday. Incredible indeed.

Let us then understand the principle on which he declared the repeal of the sabbath. He taught that the blood of Christ cleansed all things; therefore there was nothing specially clean. Christ had vindicated all for God: therefore there was no one thing more God's than another. For to assert one thing as God's more than another, is by implication to admit that other to be less God's.

The blood of Christ had vindicated God's parental right to all humanity; therefore there could be no peculiar people. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free: but Christ is all and in all." It had proclaimed God's property in all places: therefore there could be no one place intrinsically holier than another. No human dedication, no human consecration, could localize God in space. Hence the first martyr quoted from the prophet: "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build for Me? saith the Lord."

Lastly, the Gospel of Christ had sanctified all time: hence no time could be specially God's. For to assert that Sunday is more God's day than Monday, is to maintain by implication Monday is His less rightfully.

Here, however, let it be observed, it is perfectly possible, and not at all inconsistent with this, that for human convenience, and even human necessities, just as it became desirable to set apart certain places in which the noise of

earthly business should not be heard for spiritual worship, so it should become desirable to set apart certain days for special worship. But then all such were defensible on the ground of wise and Christian expediency alone; they could not be placed on the ground of a Divine statute or command: they rested on the authority of the Church of Christ: and the power which had made could unmake them again.

Accordingly, in early, we cannot say exactly how early times, the Church of Christ felt the necessity of substituting something in place of the ordinances which had been repealed. And the Lord's day arose, not a day of compulsory rest; not such a day at all as modern sabbatarians suppose. Not a Jewish sabbath; rather a day in many respects absolutely contrasted with the Jewish sabbath.

For the Lord's day sprung, not out of a transference of the Jewish sabbath from Saturday to Sunday; but rather out of the idea of making the week an imitation of the life of Christ. With the early Christians, the great conception was that of following their crucified and risen Lord: they set, as it were, the clock of time to the epochs of his history. Friday represented the Death in which all Christians daily die, and Sunday the Resurrection in which all Christians daily rise to higher life. What Friday and Sunday were to the week, that Good Friday and Easter Sunday were to the year. And thus, in larger or smaller cycles, all time represented to the early Christians the mysteries of the Cross and the Risen Life hidden in humanity. And as the sunflower turns from morning till evening to the sun, so did the early Church turn for ever to her Lord, transforming week and year into a symbolical representation of His Spiritual Life.

Carefully distinguish this, the true historical view of the origin of the Lord's day, from a mere transference of a Jewish sabbath from one day to another. For St. Paul's teaching is distinct and clear, that the sabbath is annulled, and to urge the observance of the day as indispensable to salvation, was, according to him, to Judaize: "to turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto they desired to be in bondage."

II. The modifications of this view.

1. The first modification has reference to those who conscientiously observed the day. He that observeth the day, observeth it to the Lord. Let him act then on that conviction: "Let him be fully persuaded in his own mind."

There is therefore a religious *observance* of the sabbath-day possible.

We are bound by the spirit of the fourth commandment, so far as we are in the same spiritual state as they to whom it was given. The spiritual intent of Christianity is to worship God every day in the spirit. But had this law been given in all its purity to the Jews, instead of turning every week-day into a sabbath, they would have transformed every sabbath into a week-day: with no special day fixed for worship, they would have spent every day without worship. Their hearts were too dull for a devotion so spiritual and pure. Therefore a law was given, specializing a day, in order to lead them to the broader truth that every day is God's.

Now, so far as we are in the Jewish state, the fourth commandment, even in its rigour and strictness, is wisely used by us; nay, we might say, indispensable. For who is he who needs not the day? He is the man so rich in love, so conformed to the mind of Christ, so elevated into the sublime repose of heaven, that he needs no carnal ordinances at all, nor the assistance of one day in seven to kindle spiritual feelings, seeing he is, as it were, all his life in heaven already.

And doubtless, such the Apostle Paul expected the Church of Christ to be. Anticipating the second Advent at once; not knowing the long centuries of slow progress that were to come, his heart would have sunk within him could he have been told that at the end of eighteen centuries the Christian Church would be still observing days, and months, and times, and years, and still more, needing them.

Needing them, I say. For the sabbath was made for man. God made it for men in a certain spiritual state, because they needed it. The need therefore is deeply

hidden in human nature. He who can dispense with it must be holy and spiritual indeed. And he who still unholy and unspiritual, would yet dispense with it, is a man who would fain be wiser than his Maker. We, Christians as we are, still need the law: both in its restraints, and in its aids to our weakness.

No man, therefore, who knows himself, but will gladly and joyfully use the institution. No man who knows the need of his brethren, will wantonly desecrate it, or recklessly hurt even their scruples respecting its observance. And no such man can look with aught but grave and serious apprehensions on such an innovation upon English customs of life and thought, as the proposal to give public and official countenance to a scheme which will *invite* millions, I do not say to an irreligious, but certainly an unreligious use of the day of rest.

This then is the first modification of the broad view of a repealed sabbath. Repealed though it be, there is such a thing as a religious observance of it. And provided that those who are stricter than we in their views of its obligation, observe it not from superstition, nor in abridgment of Christian liberty, nor from moroseness we are bound in Christian charity to yield them all respect and honour. Let them act out their conscientious convictions. Let not him that observeth not, despise him that observeth.

The second modification of the broad view is, that there is such a thing as a *religious non-observance* of the sabbath. I lay a stress on the word religious. For St. Paul does not say that every non-observance of the sabbath is religious, but that he who not observing it, observeth it not to the Lord, is, because acting on conscientious conviction, as acceptable as the others, who, in obedience to what they believe to be His will, observe it.

He pays his non-observance to the Lord, who feeling that Christ has made him free, striving to live all his days in the spirit, and knowing that that which is displeasing to God, is not work nor recreation, but selfishness and worldliness, refuses to be bound by a Jewish ordinance

which forbade labour and recreation, only with a typical intent.

But he who, not trying to serve God on any day, gives Sunday to toil or pleasure, certainly observes not the day: but his non-observance is not rendered to the Lord. He may be free from superstition: but it is not Christ who has made him free. Nor is he one of whom St. Paul would have said that his liberty on the sabbath is as acceptable as his brother's conscientious scrupulosity.

Here, then, we are at issue with the popular defence of public recreations on the sabbath-day: not so much with respect to the practice, as with respect to the grounds on which the practice is approved. They claim liberty: but it is not Christian liberty. Like St. Paul, they demand a license for non-observance; only, it is not "non-observance to the Lord." For distinguish well. The abolition of Judaism is not necessarily the establishment of Christianity: to do away with the Sabbath-day in order to substitute a nobler, truer, more continuous sabbath, even the sabbath of all time given up to God, is well. But to do away with the special Rights of God to the sabbath, in order merely to substitute the Rights of Pleasure, or the Rights of Mammon, or even the license of profligacy and drunkenness, that, methinks, is not St. Paul's "Christian liberty!"

The second point on which we join issue is the assumption that public places of recreation, which humanize, will therefore Christianize the people. It is taken for granted that architecture, sculpture, and the wonders of Nature and Art which such buildings will contain, have a direct or indirect tendency to lead to true devotion.

Only in a very limited degree is there truth in this at all. Christianity will humanize: we are not so sure that humanizing will Christianize. Let us be clear upon this matter. Esthetics are not Religion. It is one thing to civilize and polish: it is another thing to Christianize. The Worship of the Beautiful is not the Worship of Holiness; nay, I know not whether the one may not have a tendency to disincline from the other.

At least, such was the history of ancient Greece. Greece was the home of the Arts, the sacred ground on which the worship of the Beautiful was carried to its perfection. Let those who have read the history of her decline and fall, who have perused the debasing works of her later years, tell us how music, painting, poetry, the arts, softened and debilitated and sensualized the nation's heart. Let them tell us how, when Greece's last and greatest man was warning in vain against the foe at her gates, and demanding a manlier and a more heroic disposition to sacrifice, that most polished and humanized people, sunk in trade and sunk in pleasure, were squandering enormous sums upon their buildings and their esthetics, their processions and their people's palaces, till the flood came, and the liberties of Greece were trampled down for ever beneath the feet of the Macedonian Conqueror.

No! the change of a nation's heart is not to be effected by the infusion of a taste for artistic grace. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus." Not Art, but the Cross of Christ. Simpler manners, purer lives; more self-denial; more earnest sympathy with the classes that lie below us; nothing short of that can lay the foundations of the Christianity which is to be hereafter, deep and broad.

On the other hand, we dissent from the views of those who would arrest such a project by petitions to the legislature on these grounds.

1. It is a return backwards to Judaism and Law. It may be quite true that, as we suspect, such non-observance of the day is not to the Lord: but only a scheme of mere pecuniary speculation. Nevertheless there is such a thing as a religious non-observance of the day: and we dare not "judge another man's servant: to his own master he standeth or falleth." We dare not assert the perpetual obligation of the sabbath, when an inspired apostle has declared it abrogated. We dare not refuse a public concession of that kind of recreation to the poor man which

the rich have long not hesitated to take in their sumptuous mansions and pleasure-grounds, unrebuked by the ministers of Christ, who seem touched to the quick only when the desecration of the sabbath is loud and vulgar. We cannot substitute a statute law for a repealed law of God. We may think, and we do, that there is much which may lead to dangerous consequences in this innovation: but we dare not treat it as a crime.

The second ground on which we are opposed to the ultra-rigour of sabbath observance, especially when it becomes coercive, is the danger of injuring the conscience. It is wisely taught by St. Paul that he who does anything with offence, *i.e.* with a feeling that it is wrong, does wrong. To him it is wrong, even though it be not wrong abstractedly. Therefore it is always dangerous to multiply restrictions and requirements beyond what is essential, because men feeling themselves hemmed in, break the artificial barrier, but breaking it with a sense of guilt, do thereby become hardened in conscience and prepared for transgression against commandments which are Divine and of eternal obligation. Hence it is that the criminal has so often in his confessions traced his deterioration in crime to the first step of breaking the sabbath-day: and no doubt with accurate truth. But what shall we infer from this? Shall we infer, as is so often done upon the platform and in religious books, that it proves the everlasting obligation of the sabbath? Or shall we, with a far truer philosophy of the human soul, infer, in the language of St. Peter, that we have been laying on him "a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?"—in the language of St. Paul, that "the motions of sin were by the law," that the rigorous rule was itself the stimulating, moving cause of the sin: and that when the young man, worn out with his week's toil, first stole out into the fields to taste the fresh breath of a spring-day, he did it with a vague, secret sense of transgression, and that having as it were drawn his sword in defiance against the established code of the religious world, he felt that from thence-

forward there was for him no return, and so he became an outcast, his sword against every man, and every man's sword against him? I believe this to be the true account of the matter: and believing it, I cannot but believe that the false Jewish notions of the sabbath-day which are prevalent have been exceedingly pernicious to the morals of the country.

Lastly, I remind you of the danger of mistaking a "positive" law for a moral one. The danger is that proportionably to the vehemence with which the law positive is enforced, the sacredness of moral laws is neglected. A positive law, in theological language, is a law laid down for special purposes, and corresponds with statute laws in things civil. Thus laws of quarantine and laws of excise depend for their force upon the will of the legislature, and when repealed are binding no more. But a moral law is one binding for ever, which a statute law may declare, but can neither make nor unmake.

Now when men are rigorous in the enforcement and reverence paid to laws positive, the tendency is to a corresponding indifference to the laws of eternal Right. The written supersedes in their hearts the moral. The mental history of the ancient Pharisees who observed the sabbath, and tithed mint, anise, and cummin, neglecting justice, mercy, and truth, is the history of a most dangerous but universal tendency of the human heart. And so, many a man whose heart swells with what he thinks pious horror when he sees the letter delivered or the train run upon the sabbath-day, can pass through the streets at night, undepressed and unshocked by the evidences of the wide-spreading profligacy which has eaten deep into his country's heart. And many a man who would gaze upon the domes of a crystal palace, rising above the trees, with somewhat of the same feeling with which he would look on a temple dedicated to Juggernaut, and who would fancy that something of the spirit of an ancient prophet was burning in his bosom, when his lips pronounced the Woe! Woe! of a coming doom, would sit calmly in a social circle of

English life, and scarcely feel uneasy in listening to its uncharitableness and its slanders: would hear without one throb of indignation, the common dastardly condemnation of the weak for sins which are venial in the strong: would survey the relations of the rich and poor in this country, and remain calmly satisfied that there is nothing false in them, unbrotherly and wrong. No, my brethren! let us think clearly and strongly on this matter. It may be that God has a controversy with this people. It may be, as they say, that our Father will chasten us by the sword of the foreigner. But if He does, and if judgments are in store for our country, they will fall,—not because the correspondence of the land is carried on upon the sabbath-day: nor because Sunday trains are not arrested by the legislature: nor because a public permission is given to the working-classes for a few hours' recreation on the day of rest: but because we are selfish men; and because we prefer Pleasure to Duty, and Traffic to Honour; and because we love our party more than our Church, and our Church more than our Christianity; and our Christianity more than Truth, and ourselves more than all. These are the things that defile a nation; but the labour and the recreation of its Poor, these are not the things that defile a nation.

MARRIAGE AND CELIBACY

1 Corinthians vii. 29–31.—"But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

The subject of our exposition last Sunday was an essential portion of this chapter. It is our duty to examine

now the former and the latter portions of it. These portions are occupied entirely with the inspired apostolic decision upon this one question—the comparative advantages and merits of celibacy and marriage. One preliminary question, however, is to be discussed. How came it that such a question should be put at all to the apostle? In the church at Corinth there were two different sections of society; first there were those who had been introduced into the church through Judaism, and afterwards those who had been converted from different forms of heathenism. Now it is well known, that it was the tendency of Judaism highly to venerate the marriage state, and just in the same proportion to disparage that of celibacy, and to place those who led a single life under a stigma and disgrace. Those converts, therefore, entered into the Church of Christ carrying with them their old Jewish prejudices. On the other hand, many who had entered into the Christian Church had been converted to Christianity from different forms of heathenism. Among these prevailed a tendency to the belief (which originated primarily in the oriental schools of philosophy) that the highest virtue consisted in the denial of all natural inclinations, and the suppression of all natural desires; and looking upon marriage on one side only, and that the lowest, they were tempted to consider it as low, earthly, carnal, and sensual. It was at this time that Christianity entered into the world, and while it added fresh dignity and significance to the marriage relationship, it at the same time shed a splendour and a glory upon the other state. The virginity of the mother of Our Lord —the solitary life of John the Baptist—the pure and solitary youth of Christ Himself—had thrown upon celibacy a meaning and dignity which it did not possess before. No marvel, therefore, that to men so educated and but half prepared for Christianity, practices like these should have become exaggerations; for it rarely happens that any right ideas can be given to the world without suffering exaggeration. Human nature progresses, the human mind goes on; but it is rarely in a straight line, almost always through

the medium of reaction, rebounding from extremes which produce contrary extremes. So it was in the Church of Corinth. There were two opposite parties holding views diametrically opposed to one another—one honouring the married and depreciating the unmarried life—the other attributing peculiar dignity and sanctity to celibacy, and looking down with contempt upon the married Christian state.

It is scarcely necessary to remind ourselves that this diversity of sentiment has existed in the Church of Christ in almost all ages. For example, in the early ages, in almost all the writings of the Fathers we have exaggerated descriptions of the dignity and glory of the state of celibacy. They speak as if the marriage state was low, carnal, and worldly; and the other the only one in which it is possible to attain to the higher spiritual life—the one the natural state, fit for man, the other the angelic, fit for angels. But ordinarily, among men in general, in every age, the state of single life has been looked down upon and contemned. And then there comes to the parties who are so circumstanced a certain sense of shame, and along with this a disposition towards calumny and slander. Let us endeavour to understand the wise, inspired decision which the Apostle Paul pronounced upon this subject. He does not decide, as we might have been led to suppose he would, from his own peculiarity of disposition, upon one side only; but raises into relief the advantages and excellences of both. He says that neither state has in itself any *intrinsic* merit—neither is in itself superior to the other. "I suppose, then," he says, "that this is good for the present distress. Art thou bound unto a wife? Seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? Seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned: and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless, such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you." That is, I will spare you this trouble, in recommending a single, solitary life. You will observe that in these words he attributes no intrinsic merit or dignity to either celibacy or marriage. The comparative

advantages of these two states he decides with reference to two considerations; first of all with respect to their comparative power in raising the character of the individual, and afterwards with reference to the opportunities which each respectively gives for the service of God.

I. With respect to the single life, he tells us that he had his own proper gift from God; in other words, he was one of those rare characters who have the power of living without personal sympathy. The feelings and affections of the Apostle Paul were of a strange and rare character—tending to expansiveness rather than concentration. Those sympathies which ordinary men expend upon a few, he extended to many. The members of the churches which he had founded at Corinth, and Ephesus, and Colosse, and Philippi, were to him as children; and he threw upon them all that sympathy and affection which other men throw upon their own domestic circle. To a man so trained and educated, the single life gave opportunities of serving God which the marriage state could not give. Paul had risen at once to that philanthropy—that expansive benevolence, which most other men only attain by slow degrees, and this was made, by God's blessing, a means of serving His cause. However we may sneer at the monastic system of the Church of Rome, it is unquestionable that many great works have been done by the monks which could not have been performed by men who had entered into the marriage relationship. Such examples of heroic Christian effort as are seen in the lives of St. Bernard, of Francis Xavier, and many others, are scarcely ever to be found except in the single state. The forlorn hope in battle, as well as in the cause of Christianity, must consist of men who have no domestic relationships to divide their devotion, who will leave no wife nor children to mourn over their loss.

Let this great truth bring its improvement to those who, either of their own choice, or by the force of circumstances, are destined hereafter to live a single life on earth; and,

instead of yielding to that feeling so common among mankind—the feeling of envy at another's happiness—instead of becoming gloomy, and bitter, and censorious, let them remember what the Bible has to tell of the deep significance of the Virgin Mary's life—let them reflect upon the snares and difficulties from which they are saved—let them consider how much more time and money they can give to God—that they are called to the great work of serving causes, of entering into public questions, while others spend their time and talents only upon themselves. The state of single life, however we may be tempted to think lightly of it, is a state that has peculiar opportunities of deep blessedness.

2. On the other hand, the Apostle Paul brings forward, into strong relief, the blessedness and advantages of the marriage state. He tells us that it is a type of the union between the Redeemer and the Church. But as this belongs to another part of the subject, we shall not enter into it now. But we observe, that men in general, must have their sympathies drawn out step by step, little by little. We do not rise to philanthropy all at once. We begin with personal, domestic, particular affections. And not only is it true that rarely can any man have the whole of his love drawn out except through this domestic state, but, also, it is to be borne in mind that those who have entered into this relationship have also their own peculiar advantages. It is true that in the marriage-life, interrupted as it is by daily cares and small trifles, those works of Christian usefulness cannot be so continuously carried on as in the other. But is there not a deep meaning to be learned from the old expression—that celibacy is an *angelic* state? that it is preternatural, and not natural? that the goodness which is induced by it is not, so to speak, the natural goodness of humanity, but such a goodness as God scarcely intended? Who of us cannot recollect a period of his history when all his time was devoted to the cause of Christ; when all his money was given to the service of God; and when we were tempted to look down upon those who were less

ardent than ourselves, as if they were not Christians? But now the difficulties of life have come upon us; we have become involved in the trifles and the smallness of social domestic existence; and these have made us less devoted perhaps, less preternatural, less angelic—but more human, better fitted to enter into the daily cares and small difficulties of our ordinary humanity. And this has been represented to us by two great lives—one human, the other divine—one, the life of John the Baptist, and the other, of Jesus Christ. In both these cases is verified the saying, that "Wisdom is justified of all her children." Those who are wisdom's children—the truly wise—will recognise an even wisdom in both these lives; they will see that there are cases in which a solitary life is to be chosen for the sake of God; while there are other cases in which a social life becomes our bounden duty. But it should be specially observed here that *that* Life which has been given to us as a specimen of life for all, was a social, a human Life. Christ did not refuse to mix with the common joys and common sorrows of humanity. He was present at the marriage-feast, and by the bier of the widow's son. This of the two lives was the one which, because it was the most human, was the most divine; the most rare, the most difficult, the most natural—therefore, the most Christ-like.

II. Let us notice, in the second place, the principle upon which the apostle founds this decision. It is given in the text—"This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none," "for the fashion of this world passeth away." Now, observe here, I pray you, the deep wisdom of this apostolic decision. In point of fact it comes to this: Christianity is a spirit, not a law; it is a set of principles, not a set of rules; it is not a saying to us—You shall do this, you shall not do that—you shall use this particular dress—you shall not use that—you *shall* lead, you shall *not* lead, a married life—Christianity consists of principles, but the application of those principles is left to every man's

individual conscience. With respect not only to this particular case, but to all the questions which had been brought before him, the apostle applies the same principle; the cases upon which he decided were many and various, but the large, broad principle of his decision remains the same in all. You may marry, and you have not sinned; you may remain unmarried, and you do not sin; if you are invited to a heathen feast, you may go, or you may abstain from going; you may remain a slave, or you may become free; in these things Christianity does not consist. But what it does demand is this: that whether married or unmarried, whether a slave or free, in sorrow or in joy, you are to live in a spirit higher and loftier than that of the world.

The apostle gives us in the text two motives for this Christian unworldliness. The first motive which he lays down is this—"The time is short." You will observe how frequently, in the course of his remarks upon the questions proposed to him, the apostle turns, as it were, entirely away from the subject, as if worn out and wearied by the comparatively trivial character of the questions—as if this balancing of one earthly condition or advantage with another, were but a solemn trifling compared with eternal things. And so, here, he seems to turn away from the question before him, and speaks of the shortness of time. "The time is short!"

Time is short in reference to two things. First, it is short in reference to the person who regards it. That mysterious thing *Time* is a matter of sensation, and not a reality; a modification merely of our own consciousness, and not actual existence; depending upon the flight of ideas—long to one, short to another. The span granted to the butterfly, the child of a single summer, may be long; that which is given to the cedar of Lebanon is short. The shortness of time, therefore is entirely relative—belonging to us, not to God. Time is short, in reference to *existence*, whether you look at it before or after. Time past seems nothing; time to come always seems long. We say this chiefly for the sake of the young. To them, fifty or sixty years mean

a treasure inexhaustible. But, my young brethren, ask the old man, trembling on the verge of the grave, what he thinks of Time and Life. He will tell you that the three-score years and ten, or even the hundred-and-twenty years of Jacob, are but "few and evil." And, therefore, if you are tempted to unbelief in respect to this question, we appeal to experience—experience alone can judge of its truth.

Once more, time is short with reference to its *opportunities*. For this is the emphatic meaning in the original—literally, "the opportunity is compressed, or shut in." Brethren, time may be long, and yet the opportunity may be very short. The sun in autumn may be bright and clear, but the seed which has not been sown until then will not vegetate. A man may have vigour and energy in manhood and maturity, but the work which ought to have been done in childhood and youth cannot be done in old age. A chance once gone in this world can never be recovered. Brother men, have you learned the meaning of yesterday? Do you rightly estimate the importance of to-day? That there are duties to be done to-day which cannot be done to-morrow? This it is that throws so solemn a significance into your work. The time for working is short, therefore begin to-day; "for the night is coming when no man can work." Time is short in reference to *eternity*. It was especially with this reference that the text was written. In those days, and even by the apostles themselves, the day of the Lord's appearance and second advent seemed much nearer than it was. They believed that it would occur during their own lives. And with this belief came the feeling which comes sometimes to all. "Oh, in comparison with that vast Hereafter, this little life shrivels into nothing! What is to-day worth, or its duties or its cares?" All deep minds have thought that. The thought of time is solemn and awful to all minds in proportion to their depth—and in proportion as the mind is superficial, the thought has appeared little, and has been treated with levity. Brethren, let but a man possess himself of that thought—the deep

thought of the brevity of time; this thought—that time is short, that eternity is long—and he has learned the first great secret of unworldliness.

2. The second motive which the apostle gives us is the changing character of the external world. "The fashion of this world passeth away"—literally "the *scenery* of this world," a dramatic expression, drawn from the Grecian stage. One of the deepest of modern thinkers has told us in words often quoted, "All the world's a stage." And a deeper thinker than he, because inspired, had said long before in the similar words of the text, "the *scenery* of this world passeth away."

There are two ways in which this is true. First, it is true with respect to all the things by which we are surrounded. It is only in poetry—the poetry of the Psalms, for example—that the hills are called "everlasting." Go to the side of the ocean which bounds our country, and watch the tide going out, bearing with it the sand which it has worn from the cliffs; the very boundaries of our land are changing; they are not the same as they were when these words were written. Every day new relationships are forming around us; new circumstances are calling upon us to act—to act manfully, firmly, decisively, and up to the occasion, remembering that an opportunity once gone is gone for ever. Indulge not in vain regrets for the past, in vainer resolves for the future—act, act in the present.

Again, this is true with respect to ourselves. "The fashion of this world passeth away" in us. The feelings we have now are not those which we had in childhood. There has passed away a glory from the earth—the stars, the sun, the moon, the green fields have lost their beauty and significance—nothing remains as it was, except their repeated impressions on the mind, the impressions of time, space, eternity, colour, form; these cannot alter, but all besides has changed. Our very minds alter. There is no bereavement so painful, no shock so terrible, but time will remove or alleviate. The keenest feeling in this world time wears out at last, and our minds become like old monumental

tablets which have lost the inscription once graven deeply upon them.

In conclusion, we have to examine the nature of this Christian unworldliness which is taught us in the text. The principle of unworldliness is stated in the latter portion of the text; in the former part the apostle makes an application of the principle to four cases of life. First, to cases of domestic relationship—"it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none." Secondly, to cases of sorrow—"and they that weep as though they wept not." Thirdly, to cases of joy—"and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not." And, finally, to cases of the acquisition of worldly property—"and they that buy as though they possessed not." Time will not allow us to go into these applications; we must confine ourselves to a brief consideration of the principle. The principle of Christian unworldliness, then is this, to "use this world as not abusing it." Here Christianity takes its stand, in opposition to two contrary principles. The spirit of the world says, "Time is short, therefore use it while you have it; take your fill of pleasure while you may." A narrow religion says, "Time is short, therefore temporal things should receive no attention: do not weep, do not rejoice; it is beneath a Christian." In opposition to the narrow spirit of religion, Christianity says, "*Use* this world;"—in opposition to the spirit of the world Christianity says, "Do not *abuse* it." A distinct duty arises from this principle to use the world. While in the world we are citizens of the world: it is our *duty* to share its joys, to take our part in its sorrows, not to shrink from its difficulties, but to mix ourselves with its infinite opportunities. So that if time be short, so far from that fact lessening their dignity or importance, it infinitely increases them; since upon these depend the destinies of our eternal being. Unworldliness is this—to hold things from God in the perpetual conviction that they will not last; to have the world, and not to let the world have you; to be the world's masters, and not the world's slaves.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT OF LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER

JOHN xiii. 34.—"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

THESE words derive impressiveness from having been spoken immediately before the last Supper, and on the eve of the great Sacrifice: the commandment of Love issued appropriately at the time of the Feast of Love, and not long before the great Act of Love. For the love of Christ was no fine *saying:* it cost Him His life to say these words with meaning, "As I have loved you."

There is a difficulty in the attempt to grasp the meaning of this command, arising from the fact that words change their meaning. Our Lord affixed a new significance to the word Love: it had been in use, of course, before, but the new sense in which He used it made it a new word.

His law is not adequately represented by the word Love: because love is, by conventional usage, appropriated to one species of human affection, which, in the commoner men, is the most selfish of all our feelings: and in the best is too exclusive and individual to represent that Charity which is universal.

Nor is Charity a perfect symbol of His meaning: for charity by use is identified with another form of love which is but a portion of it, almsgiving; and too saturated with that meaning to be entirely disengaged from it, even when we use it most accurately.

Benevolence or Philanthropy, in derivation, come nearer to the idea: but yet you feel at once that these words fall short: they are too tame and cool; too merely passive, as states of feeling rather than forms of life.

We have no sufficient word. There is therefore no help for it, but patiently to strive to master the meaning of this

mighty word Love, in the only light that is left us, the light of the Saviour's life: "As I have loved you:" that alone expounds it. We will dispossess our minds of all preconceived notions; remove all low associations, all partial and conventional ones. If we would understand this law, it must be ever a "new" commandment, ever receiving fresh light and meaning from His life.

Take, I. The novelty of the law—"That ye love one another."

II. The Spirit or measure of it—"As I have loved you."

I. Its novelty. A "new commandment:" yet that law was old. See 1 John ii. 7, 8.

1. It was new as a historical fact. We talk of the apostolic mission as a matter of course; we say that the apostles were ordered to go and plant churches, and so we dismiss the great fact. But we forget that the command was rather the result of a spirit working from within, than of an injunction working from without. That spirit was Love.

And when that new spirit was in the world, see how straightway it created a new thing. Men before that had travelled into foreign countries: the naturalist to collect specimens: the historian to accumulate facts: the philosopher to hive up wisdom, or else he had stayed in his cell or grove to paint *pictures* of beautiful love. But the spectacle of an Apostle Paul crossing oceans not to conquer kingdoms, not to hive up knowledge, but to impart life: not to accumulate stores for self, but to give, and to spend himself—was new in the history of the world. The celestial fire had touched the hearts of men, and their hearts flamed: and it caught, and spread, and would not stop. On they went, that glorious band of brothers, in their strange enterprise, over oceans, and through forests, penetrating into the dungeon and to the throne—to the hut of the savage feeding on human flesh, and to the shore lined with the skin-clad inhabitants of these far Isles of Britain. Read the account given by Tertullian of the marvellous rapidity with which the Christians increased and swarmed, and you are re-

minded of one of those vast armies of ants which moves across a country in irresistible myriads, drowned by thousands in rivers, cut off by fire, consumed by man and beast, and yet fresh hordes succeeding interminably to supply their place.

A new voice was heard: a new yearning upon earth; man pining at being severed from his brother, and longing to burst the false distinctions which had kept the best hearts from each other so long—an infant cry of life—the cry of the young Church of God. And all this from Judea—the narrowest, most bigoted, most intolerant nation on the face of the earth.

Now I say that this was historically a new thing.

2. It was new in extent. It was, in literal words, an old commandment given before both to Jew and Gentile. To the Jew as for instance in Lev. xix. 18. To the Gentile, in the recognition which was so often made of the beauty of the law in its partial application, as in the case of friendship, patriotism, domestic attachment, and so on.

But the difference lay in the extent in which these words "one another" were understood. By them, or rather by "neighbour," the Jew meant his countryman; and narrowed that down again to his friends among his countrymen—so that the well-known Rabbinical gloss upon these words, current in the days of Christ, was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy." And what the Gentile understood by the extent of the law of love, we may learn from the well-known words of their best and wisest, who thanked heaven that he was born a man, and not a brute—a Greek, and not a barbarian: as if to be a barbarian were identical with being a brute.

Now, listen to Christ's exposition of the word neighbour. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies." And He went further,—As a specimen of a neighbour He specially selected one of that nation whom, as a theologian and a patriot, every Jew had been taught to hate. And just as the application of electricity to the

innumerable wants of human life and to new ends, is reckoned a new discovery and invention of modern times (though the fact has been familiar for ages to the Indian child in the forest of the far west, and applied by him for ages to his childish sports), so the extension of this grand principle of love to all the possible cases of life, and to all possible persons—even though the principle was known and applied long before, in love to friends, country, and relations —is truly and properly a new commandment, a discovery, a gospel, a revelation.

3. It was new in being made the central principle of a system. Never had obedience before been trusted to a principle: it had always been hedged round by a law. The religion of Christ is not a law, but a spirit—not a creed, but a life. To the one motive of Love, God has intrusted the whole work of winning the souls of His redeemed. The heart of man was made for love: pants and pines for it:—only in the love of Christ, and not in restrictions, can his soul expand. Now it was reserved for One to pierce, with the glance of intuition, down into the springs of human action, and to proclaim the simplicity of its machinery. "Love," said the apostle after Him—"Love is the fulfilling of the law."

We are told that in the new commandment the old perishes: that under the law of love, man is free from the law of works. Let us see how.

Take any commandment—*e. g.* the sixth, the seventh, the eighth. I may abstain from murder and theft, deterred by law: because law has annexed to them certain penalties. But I may also rise into the spirit of Charity: then I am free from the law, the law was not made for a righteous man: the law no more binds or restrains me, now that I love my neighbour, than the dyke built to keep in the sea at high tide restrains it when that sea has sunk to low watermark.

Or the seventh. You may keep that law from dread of discovery—or you may learn a higher Love: and then you *cannot* injure a human soul: you cannot degrade a human

spirit. Charity has made the old commandment superfluous. In the strong language of St. John, you *cannot* sin because you are born of God.

It was the proclamation of this, the great living principle of human obedience, not with the pedantry of a philosopher, nor the exaggeration of an orator, but in the simple reality of life, which made this commandment of Christ a new commandment.

II. The spirit or measure of the law,—"*as* I have loved you."

Broadly, the love of Christ was the spirit of giving all He had to give. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." Christ's love was not a sentiment; it was a self-giving. To that His adversaries bore testimony:—"He saved others; Himself He cannot save." Often as we have read these words, did it ever strike us, and if not, does it not bring a flash of surprise when we perceive it, that these words, meant as taunt, were really the noblest panegyric, a testimony higher and more adequate far than even that of the centurion? "He saved others; Himself He cannot save." The first clause contained the answer to the second—"Himself He cannot save!" How could He, having saved others? How can any keep what he gives? How can any live for self, when he is living for others? Unconsciously, those enemies were enunciating the very principle of Christianity, the grand law of all existence, that only by losing self you can save others; that only by giving life you can bless. Love gives itself. The mother spends herself in giving life to her child; the soldier dies for his country; nay, even the artist produces nothing destined for immortality, nothing that will *live*, except so far as he has forgotten himself, and merged his very being in his work.

"He saved others; Himself He cannot save." That was the love of Christ. Now to descend to particulars.

That spirit of self-giving manifests itself in the shape of considerate kindliness. Take three cases:—First, that in

which He fed the people with bread. "I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat." There was a tenderness which, not absorbed in His own great designs, considered a number of small particulars of their state, imagined, provided; and this for the satisfaction of the lowest wants. Again, to the disciples: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." He would not overwork them in the sublimest service. He did not grudge from duty their interval of relaxation; He even tenderly enforced it. Lastly, His dying words: "Behold thy mother! Woman, behold thy son!" Short sentences. He was too exhausted to say more. But in that hour of death-torture, He could think of her desolate state when He was gone, and with delicate, thoughtful attention provide for her wellbeing.

There are people who would do great acts; but because they wait for great opportunities, life passes, and the acts of love are not done at all. Observe, this considerateness of Christ was shown in little things. And such are the parts of human life. Opportunities for doing greatly seldom occur—life is made up of infinitesimals. If you compute the sum of happiness in any given day, you will find that it was composed of small attentions,—kind looks, which made the heart swell, and stirred into health that sour, rancid film of misanthropy which is apt to coagulate on the stream of our inward life, as surely as we live in heart apart from our fellow-creatures. Doubtless, the memory of each one of us will furnish him with the picture of some member of a family whose very presence seemed to shed happiness: A daughter, perhaps, whose light step even in the distance irradiated every one's countenance. What was the secret of such an one's power? what had she done? Absolutely nothing; but radiant smiles, beaming good humour, the tact of divining what every one felt, and every one wanted, told that she had got out of self and learned to think for others; so that at one time it showed itself in deprecating the quarrel, which lowering brows and raised tones already showed to be impending, by sweet words; at another, by smoothing

an invalid's pillow; at another, by soothing a sobbing child; at another, by humouring and softening a father who had returned weary and ill-tempered from the irritating cares of business. None but she saw those things. None but a loving heart *could* see them.

That was the secret of her heavenly power. Call you those things homely trifles, too homely for a sermon? By reference to the character of Christ, they rise into something quite sublime. For that is loving as He loved. And remark, too, these trifles prepared for larger deeds. The one who will be found in trial capable of great acts of love, is ever the one who is always doing considerate small ones. The Soul which poured itself out to death upon the cross for the human race, was the spirit of Him who thought of the wants of the people, contrived for the rest of the disciples, and was thoughtful for a mother.

Once again,—It was a love never foiled by the unworthiness of those on whom it had been once bestowed. It was a love which faults, desertion, denial, unfaithfulness, could not chill, even though they wrung His heart. He had chosen: and He trusted. Even in ordinary manhood, that is a finely-tempered heart, one of no ordinary mould, which can say, "It ever was my way, and shall be still, when I do trust a man to trust him wholly."

And yet there was everything to shake His trust in humanity. The Pharisees called Him Good Master, and were circumventing Him all the while. The people shouted hosannas, and three days afterwards were shrieking for His blood. One disciple who had dipped in the same dish, and been trusted with His inmost counsels, deceived and betrayed Him; another was ashamed of Him; three fell asleep while He was preparing for death; all forsook Him. Yet nothing is more surprising than that unshaken, I had well-nigh said, *obstinate*, trust with which He clung to His hopes of our Nature, and believed in the face of demonstration.

As we mix in life, there comes, especially to sensitive natures, a temptation to distrust. In young life, we throw

ourselves with unbounded and glorious confidence on such as we think well of - an error soon corrected: for we soon find out, too soon! that men and women are not what they seem. Then comes disappointment; and the danger is a reaction of desolating and universal mistrust. For if we look on the doings of man with a merely worldly eye, and pierce below the surface of character, we are apt to feel bitter scorn and disgust for our fellow-creatures. We have lived to see human hollowness: the ashes of the Dead Sea shore; the falseness of what seemed so fair; the mouldering beneath the whited sepulchre: and no wonder if we are tempted to think "friendship *all* a cheat—smiles hypocrisy —words deceit;" and they who are what is called *knowing* in life contract by degrees, as the result of their experience, a hollow distrust of men, and learn to sneer at apparently good motives. That demoniacal sneer which we have seen, ay perhaps felt, curling the lip at times, "Doth Job serve God for nought?"

The only preservative from this withering of the heart is Love. Love is its own perennial fount of strength. The strength of affection is a proof not of the worthiness of the object, but of the largeness of the soul which loves. Love descends, not ascends. The might of a river depends not on the quality of the soil through which it passes, but on the inexhaustibleness and depth of the spring from which it proceeds. The greater mind cleaves to the smaller with more force than the other to it. A parent loves the child more than the child the parent; and partly because the parent's heart is larger, not because the child is worthier. The Saviour loved His disciples infinitely more than His disciples loved Him, because His heart was infinitely larger. Love trusts on—ever hopes and expects better things, and this, a trust springing from itself and out of its own deeps alone.

And more than this. It is this *trusting* love that makes men what they are trusted to be, so realizing itself. Would you make men *trustworthy?* Trust them. Would you make them true? Believe them. This was the real force

of that sublime battle-cry which no Englishman hears without emotion. When the crews of the fleet of Britain knew that they were *expected* to do their duty, they *did* their duty. They felt in that spirit-stirring sentence that they were trusted: and the simultaneous cheer that rose from every ship was a forerunner of victory—the battle was half-won already. They went to serve a country which expected from them great things: and they did great things. Those pregnant words raised an enthusiasm for the chieftain who had thrown himself upon his men in trust, which a double line of hostile ships could not appal, nor decks drenched in blood extinguish.

And it is on this principle that Christ wins the hearts of His redeemed. He trusted the doubting Thomas; and Thomas arose with a faith worthy "of his Lord and his God." He would not suffer even the lie of Peter to shake His conviction that Peter might love Him yet; and Peter answered nobly to that sublime forgiveness. His last prayer was in extenuation and hope for the race who had rejected Him—and the kingdoms of the world are become His own. He has loved us, God knows why: I do not; and we, all unworthy though we be, respond faintly to that love, and try to be what He would have us.

Therefore, come what may, hold fast to love. Though men should rend your heart, let them not embitter or harden it. We win by tenderness: we conquer by forgiveness. Oh, strive to enter into something of that large celestial Charity which is meek, enduring, unretaliating, and which even the overbearing world cannot withstand for ever. Learn the new commandment of the Son of God. Not to love, but to love as He loved. Go forth in this spirit to your life-duties: go forth, children of the cross, to carry everything before you, and win victories for God by the conquering power of a love like His.

REALIZING THE SECOND ADVENT

JOB xix. 25–27.—"For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me."

THE hardest, the severest, the last lesson which man has to learn upon this earth, is submission to the will of God. It is the hardest lesson, because to our blinded eyesight it often seems a cruel will. It is a severe lesson, because it can be only taught by the blighting of much that has been most dear. It is the last lesson, because when a man has learned that, he is fit to be transplanted from a world of wilfulness, to a world in which one Will alone is loved, and only one is done. All that saintly experience ever had to teach resolves itself into this, the lesson how to say affectionately, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Slowly and stubbornly our hearts acquiesce in that. The holiest in this congregation, so far as he has mastered the lesson, will acknowledge that many a sore and angry feeling against his God had to be subdued, many a dream of earthly brightness broken, and many a burning throb stilled in a proud resentful heart, before he was willing to suffer God to be sovereign in His own world, and do with him and his as seemed to Him best. The earliest record that we have of this struggle in the human bosom is found in this book of Job. It is the most ancient statement we have of the perplexities and miseries of life so graphic, so true to nature, that it proclaims at once that what we are reading is drawn not from romance but life. It has been said, that religious experience is but the fictitious creation of a polished age, when fanciful feelings are called into existence by hearts bent back in reflex and morbid action, on themselves. We have an answer to that in this book. Religion is no morbid fancy. In the rough

rude ages when Job lived, when men did not dwell on their feelings as in later centuries, the heart-work of religion was manifestly the same earnest, passionate thing that it is now. The heart's misgivings were the same beneath the tent of an Arabian Emir which they are beneath the roof of a modern Christian. Blow after blow fell on the Oriental Chieftain:—one day he was a father—a prince—the lord of many vassals and many flocks, and buoyant in one of the best of blessings, health; the next, he was a childless, blighted, ruined man. And then it was that there came from Job's lips those yearnings for the quiet of the grave, which are so touching, so real; and, considering that some of the strongest of the Elect of God have yielded to them for a moment, we might almost say so pardonable: "I should have been at rest—where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. There the prisoners rest together: they hear not the voice of the oppressor. Wherefore is light given unto him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter of soul—which long for death, but it cometh not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures—which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can find the grave?" What is the book of Job but the record of an earnest soul's perplexities? The double difficulty of life solved there, the existence of moral evil—the question whether suffering is a mark of wrath or not. What falls from Job's lips is the musing of a man half-stunned, half-surprised, looking out upon the darkness of life, and asking sorrowfully why are these things so? And all that falls from his friends' lips is the commonplace remarks of men upon what is inscrutable, maxims learned second-hand by rote and not by heart, fragments of deep truths, but truths misapplied, distorted, torn out of all connexion of time and place, so as to become actual falsehoods, only blistering a raw wound. It was from these awkward admonitions that Job appealed in the text. He appealed from the tribunal of man's opinion to a tribunal where sincerity shall be cleared and vindicated. He appealed from a world of confusion, where all the foundations of the earth are out of course, to a world where

all shall be set right. He appealed from the dark dealings of a God whose way it is to hide Himself, to a God who shall stand upon this earth in the clear radiance of a love on which suspicion's self cannot rest a doubt. It was faith straining through the mist, and discerning the firm land that is beyond. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

We take two points :—

I. The certainty of God's interference in the affairs of this world.

II. The means of realizing that interference.

God's interference, again, is contemplated in this passage in a twofold aspect: A present superintendence—"I know that my Redeemer liveth." A future, personal, visible interference—"He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth."

I. His present superintendence.

1. The first truth contained in that is God's personal existence. It is not chance, nor fate which sits at the wheel of this world's revolutions. It was no fortuitous concourse of atoms which massed themselves into a world of beauty. It was no accidental train of circumstances which has brought the human race to their present state. It was a living God. And it is just so far as this is the conviction of every day, and every hour, and every minute —"My Redeemer *liveth*"—that one man deserves to be called more religious than another. To be religious is to feel that God is the Ever Near. It is to go through life with this thought coming instinctively and unbidden, "Thou, God, seest me." A life of religion is a life of faith: and faith is that strange faculty by which man feels the presence of the invisible; exactly as some animals have the power of seeing in the dark. That is the difference between the Christian and the world. Most men know nothing beyond what they see. This lovely world is all in all to

them: its outer beauty: not its hidden Loveliness.—Prosperity—struggle—sadness—it is all the same:—They struggle through it all alone, and when old age comes, and the companions of early days are gone, they feel that they are solitary. In all this strange deep world, they never meet, or but for a moment, the Spirit of it all, who stands at their very side. And it is exactly the opposite of this that makes a Christian. Move where he will, there is a thought and a presence which he cannot put aside. He is haunted for ever by the Eternal Mind. God looks out upon him from the clear sky, and through the thick darkness—is present in the rain-drop that trickles down the branches, and in the tempest that crashes down the forest. A Living Redeemer stands beside him—goes with him—talks with him, as a man with his friend. The emphatic description of a life of spirituality is: "Enoch walked with God:" and it seems to be one reason why a manifestation of God was given us in the flesh, that this Livingness of God might be more distinctly felt by us. We must not throw into these words of Job a meaning which Job had not. Reading these verses, some have discovered in them all the Christian doctrine of the Second Advent—of a resurrection—of the humanity of Christ. This is simply an anachronism. Job was an Arabian Emir, not a Christian. All that Job meant by these words was, that he knew he had a vindicator in God above: that though his friends had the best of it then, and though worms were preying on his flesh, yet at last God Himself would interfere to prove his innocence. But God has given to us, for our faith to rest on, something more distinct and tangible than He gave to Job. There has been One on earth through whose lips God's voice spoke; and from whose character was reflected the character of God. A living Person manifesting Deity. It is all this added meaning gained from Christ with which we use these words: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." But we must remember that all that was not revealed to Job.

2. The second truth implied in the personal existence of

a Redeemer is sympathy. It was the keenest part of Job's trial that no heart beat pulse to pulse with his. His friends misunderstood him . and his wife, in a moment of atheistic bitterness, in the spirit of our own infidel poet, "Let no man say that God in mercy gave that stroke,"—addressed him thus: "Curse God and die." In the midst of this, it seems to have risen upon his heart with a strange power to soothe, that he was not alone: gall and bitterness were distilling from the lips of man; and molten lead was dropping from the hand of God. But there was a great difference between the two inflictions. Men were doing their work, unknowing of the pain they gave: God was meting out His in the scales of a most exquisite compassion, not one drop too much, and every drop that fell had a meaning of love in it. "Affliction," said the tried man, "cometh not out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the round"—superintending all this, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

And here there is one word full of meaning, from which we collect the truth of sympathy. It is that little word of appropriation, "My" Redeemer. Power is shown by God's attention to the vast: Sympathy by His condescension to the small. It is not the thought of heaven's sympathy by which we are impressed, when we gaze through the telescope on the mighty world of space, and gain an idea of what is meant by infinite. Majesty and power are there—but the very vastness excludes the thought of sympathy. It is when we look into the world of insignificance which the microscope reveals, and find that God has gorgeously painted the atoms of creation, and exquisitely furnished forth all that belongs to minutest life, that we feel that God sympathizes and individualizes. When we are told that God is the Redeemer of the *world*, we know that love dwells in the bosom of the Most High; but if we want to know that God feels for us individually and separately, we must learn by heart this syllable of endearment, "*My* Redeemer." Child of God! if you would have your thought of God something beyond a cold feeling

of His presence, let faith *appropriate* Christ. You are as much the object of God's solicitude as if none lived but yourself. He has counted the hairs of your head. In Old Testament language, "He has put your tears into His bottle." He has numbered your sighs and your smiles. He has interpreted the desires for which you have not found a name nor an utterance yourself. If you have not learned to say, *My* Redeemer, then just so far as there is anything tender or affectionate in your disposition, you will tread the path of your pilgrimage with a darkened and a lonely heart, and when the day of trouble comes, there will be none of that triumphant elasticity which enabled Job to look down as from a rock upon the surges which were curling their crests of fury at his feet, but could only reach his bosom with their spent spray.

3. The third thing implied in the present superintendence is God's vindication of wrongs. The word translated here Redeemer, is one of quite peculiar signification. In all the early stages of society, the redress of wrongs is not a public, but a private act. It was then as now—blood for blood. But the executioner of the law was invested with something of a sacred character. Now he is the mere creature of a country's law: then he was the delegated Hand of God; for the next of kin to the murdered man stood forward solemnly in God's name as the champion of the defenceless, the *goel* or Avenger of Blood. Goel is the word here: so that, translated into the language of those far-back days, Job was professing his conviction that there was a champion, or an Avenger, who would one day do battle for his wrongs.

It is a fearful amount of this kind of work which is in arrear for the Avenger to execute, accumulating century by century and year by year. From the days of Cain and Abel there have been ever two classes, the oppressor and the oppressed, the gentle humble ones who refuse to right themselves, and the unscrupulous who force them aside. The Church has ever had the world against it. The world struck its first deadly blow by the hand of Cain, and it has been striking ever since: from the battlefield—and the

martyr's stake—and the dungeons of the inquisition—and the prisons of the lordly tyrant—the blood of the innocent has cried for vengeance. By taunt and sneer, the world has had her triumph. And the servants of the Meekest have only had this to cheer them, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

There is a persecution sharper than that of the axe. There is an iron that goes into the heart deeper than the knife. Cruel sneers, and sarcasms, and pitiless judgments, and cold-hearted calumnies—these are persecution. There is the tyrant of the nursery, and the playground, and the domestic circle, as well as of the judgment-hall. "Better were it," said the Redeemer, "for that man if a millstone had been hanged about his neck." Did you ever do that? —Did you ever pour bitterness into a heart that God was bruising, by a cold laugh, or a sneer, or a galling suspicion? —Into a sister's heart, or a friend's, or even a stranger's?— Remember—when you sent them, as Job's friends sent him, to pour out their griefs alone before their Father, your name went up to the Avenger's ears, mingled with the cries of His own elect.

There is a second mode in which God interferes in this world's affairs. There is a present superintendence perceived by faith. But there is a future redress which will be made manifest to sight. "He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." I shall see Him.

First of all, there will be a visible, personal interference. All that Job meant was in the case of his own wrongs. But if *we* use those words, we must apply them in a higher sense. The Second Advent of Christ is supposed by some to mean an appearance of Jesus in the flesh to reign and triumph visibly. Others who feel that the visual perception of His Form would be a small blessing, and that the highest and truest presence is always spiritual and realized by the spirit, believe that His advent will be a coming in Power. We will not dispute:—controversy whets the intellect, and only starves, or worse, poisons the heart. We will take what is certain. Every signal manifestation of the right, and vindi-

cation of the truth in judgment, is called in Scripture a coming of the Son of Man. A Personal Advent of the Redeemer is one which can be perceived by foes as well as recognised by friends. The destruction of Jerusalem, recognised by the heathen themselves as judgment, is called in the Bible a coming of Christ. In the Deluge—in the destruction of the cities of the plain—in the confusion of tongues—God is said to have come down to visit the earth. There are two classes, then, who shall see that sight. Men like Job, who feel that their Redeemer liveth; and men like Balaam, from whose lips words of truth, terrible to him, came: "I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh."—"Every eye shall see Him."—*You* will see the triumph of the Right—the destruction of the Wrong. The awful question is: As Balaam—or as Job? Besides this, it will be unexpected: every judgment coming of Christ is as the springing of a mine. There is a moment of deep suspense after the match has been applied to the fuse which is to fire the train. Men stand at a distance and hold their breath. There is nothing seen but a thin, small column of white smoke, rising fainter, and fainter, till it seems to die away. Then men breathe again: and the inexperienced soldier would approach the place thinking that the thing has been a failure. It is only faith in the experience of the commander, or the veterans, which keeps men from hurrying to the spot again—till just when expectation has begun to die away, the low, deep thunder sends up the column of earth majestically to heaven, and all that was on it comes crushing down again in its far circle, shattered and blackened with the blast.

It is so with the world. By God's Word the world is doomed. The moment of suspense is past: the first centuries in which men expected the convulsion to take place at once; for even Apostles were looking for it in their lifetime. We have fallen upon days of scepticism. There are no signs of ruin yet. We tread upon it like a solid thing fortified by its adamantine hills for ever. There is nothing against that, but a few words in a printed book. But the world is mined:

and the spark has fallen; and just at the moment when serenity is at its height, "the heaven shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and the feet of the Avenger shall stand on the Earth.

II. The means of realizing this interference.

There is a difference between knowing a thing and realizing it. When a poor man becomes suddenly the possessor of a fortune or of dignity, it is some time before the thing becomes so natural to him that he can act in his new sphere like his proper self—it is all strangeness at first. When the criminal hears the death-sentence in the dock, his cheeks are tearless. He hears the words, but scarcely understands that they have anything to do with him. He has not realized that it is he himself that has to die. When bereavement comes, it is not at the moment when the breath leaves the body that we feel what has been lost:—we know, but yet we must have it in detail: see the empty chair—and the clothes that will never be worn again—and perceive day after day pass—and he comes not: then we realize.

Job *knew* that God was the vindicator of wrongs—that he said. But why did he go on repeating in every possible form the same thing: "I shall see God—see Him for myself—mine eyes shall behold Him—yes, mine and not another's?" It would seem as if he were doing what a man does when he repeats over and over to himself a thing which he cannot picture out in its reality. It was true: but it was strange, and shadowy, and unfamiliar.

It is no matter of uncertainty to any one of us whether he himself shall die. He knows it. Every time the funeral bell tolls, the thought in some shape suggests itself—I am a mortal, dying man. That is knowing it. Which of us has realized it? Who can shut his eyes, and bring it before him as a reality, that the day will come when the hearse will stand at the door for him, and that all this bright world will be going on without him; and that the very flesh which now walks about so complacently, will have the coffin-lid shut

down upon it, and be left to darkness, and loneliness, and silence, and the worm? Or take a case still more closely suggested by the text—out of the grave we must rise again—long after all that is young, and strong, and beautiful before me, shall have mouldered into forgetfulness. Earth shall hear her Master's voice breaking the long silence of the centuries, and our dust shall hear it, and stand up among the myriads that are moving on to judgment. Each man in his own proper identity, his very self, must see God, and be seen by Him—looking out on the strange new scene, and doomed to be an actor in it for all eternity. We all *know* that—on which of our hearts is it stamped, not as a doctrine to be proved by texts, but as one of those things which must be hereafter, and in sight of which we are to live now?

There are two ways suggested to us by this passage for realizing these things. The first of these is meditation. No man forgets what the mind has dwelt long on. It is not by a passing glance that things become riveted in the memory. It is by forcing the memory to call them up again and again in leisure hours. It is in the power of meditation to bring danger in its reality so vividly before the imagination, that the whole frame can start instinctively as if the blow were falling, or as if the precipice were near. It is in the power of meditation so to engrave scenes of loveliness on a painter's eye, that he transfers to the canvas a vivid picture that was real to him before it was real to others. It is in the power of meditation so to abstract the soul from all that is passing before the bodily eye, that the tongue shall absently speak out the words with which the heart was full, not knowing that others are standing by. It seems to have been this that Job was doing—he was realizing by meditation. You can scarcely read over these words without fancying them the syllables of a man who was thinking aloud.

It is like a soliloquy rather than a conversation. "I shall see Him." Myself. Not another. My own eyes.

This is what we want. It is good for a man to get alone, and then in silence think upon his own death, and feel how time is hurrying him along: that a little while ago and he

was not—a little while still and he will be no more. It is good to take the Bible in his hands, and read those passages at this season of the year which speak of the Coming and the end of all, till from the printed syllables there seems to come out something that has life, and form, and substance in it, and all things that are passing in the world group themselves in preparation for that, and melt into its outline. Let us try to live with these things in view. God our Friend —Christ our living Redeemer; our sympathizing Brother; our conquering Champion:—The triumph of Truth: the End of Wrong. We shall live upon realities then: and this world will fade away into that which we know it is, but yet cannot realize—an Appearance, and a Shadow.

Lastly, God ensures that His children shall realize all this by affliction. Job had admitted these things before, but this time he spoke from the ashes on which he was writhing. And if ever a man is sincere, it is when he is in pain. If ever that superficial covering of conventionalities falls from the soul, which gathers round it as the cuticle does upon the body, and the rust upon the metal, it is when men are suffering. There are many things which nothing but sorrow can teach us. Sorrow is the great Teacher. Sorrow is the Realizer. It is a strange and touching thing to hear the young speak truths which are not yet within the limits of their experience: to listen while they say that life is sorrowful, that friends are treacherous, that there is quiet in the grave. When we are boys we adopt the phrases that we hear. In a kind of prodigal excess of happiness, we say that the world is a dream, and life a nothing—that eternity lasts for ever, and that all here is disappointment. But there comes a day of sharpness, when we find to our surprise that what we said had a meaning in it; and we are startled. That is the sentimentalism of youth passing into reality. In the lips of the young such phrases are only sentimentalities. What we mean by sentimentalism is that state in which a man speaks things deep and true, not because he feels them strongly, but because he perceives that they are beautiful, and that it is touching and fine to say them—things which

he fain *would* feel, and fancies that he *does* feel. Therefore, when all is well, when friends abound, and health is strong, and the comforts of life are around us, religion becomes faint and shadowy. Religious phraseology passes into cant —the gay, and light, and trifling, use the same words as the holiest; till the earnest man, who *feels* what the world is sentimentalizing about, shuts up his heart, and either coins other phrases or else keeps silence.

And then it is that if God would rescue a man from that unreal world of names and mere knowledge, He does what He did with Job—He strips him of his flocks, and his herds, and his wealth; or else, what is the equivalent, of the power of enjoying them—the desire of his eyes falls from him at a stroke. Things become real then. Trial brings man face to face with God—God and he touch; and the flimsy veil of bright cloud that hung between him and the sky is blown away: he feels that he is standing outside the earth with nothing between him and the Eternal Infinite. Oh! there is something in the sick-bed, and the aching heart, and the restlessness and the languor of shattered health, and the sorrow of affections withered, and the stream of life poisoned at its fountain, and the cold, lonely feeling of utter rawness of heart which is felt when God strikes home in earnest, that forces a man to feel what is real and what is not.

This is the blessing of affliction to those who will lie still, and not struggle in a cowardly or a resentful way. It is God speaking to Job out of the whirlwind, and saying—In the sunshine and the warmth you cannot meet Me; but in the hurricane and the darkness, when wave after wave has swept down and across the soul, you shall see My Form, and hear My Voice, and know that your Redeemer liveth.

WAITING FOR THE SECOND ADVENT

2 THESSALONIANS iii. 5.—"And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

THE two Epistles to the Thessalonians contain more expressly than any other St. Paul's views respecting the second Advent of Christ. The First Epistle was written to correct certain enthusiastic views respecting that Coming. But the Second Epistle tells us that the effort had failed. For, in the meanwhile, another epistle had been forged in St. Paul's name, asserting that the day was near, and so opening the floodgates of fanaticism. To counteract this, he tells them not to be shaken in mind by any word or letter as from him, as that the Day of Christ was as hand. And, contrary to his usual practice, he writes the salutation at the close with his own hand, making it a test hereafter of the genuineness of his Epistles.

Let us try to paint a picture of the state of the Thessalonian Church. Such phenomena had appeared as might have been expected to arise from a belief that the end of the world was near. Men forsook their stated employments; the poor would not work, but expected to be maintained by their richer brethren. Men, being idle, spent their time in useless discussions, neglected their own affairs, gossipped, and indulged a prying curiosity into the affairs of others. Hence arose the necessity for the admonition—"Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your hands, as we commanded you;" and so the Apostle had said, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us; for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you; neither did

we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you."

Moreover, two opposite lines of conduct were adopted by persons of different temperament. Some greedily received every wild tale and mysterious prediction of the Advent, and listened eagerly to every fanatic who could work upon the vulgar credulity. Others, perceiving that there was so much imposture, concluded that it was safest to believe nothing; and accordingly were sceptical of every claim to inspiration. In admonition of the first class, St. Paul says, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." In admonition of the second, "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings."

The opposite tendencies of scepticism and credulity will be found very near together in all ages. Some men refusing to believe that God speaks in the signs of the times; others running after every book on prophecy, seeking after signs, believing in miracles and imposture, mesmerisms, electro-biologies, winking pictures—anything, provided it be marvellous—it is the same state of mind exactly!

To meet the evil of this feverish, disturbed state of the Thessalonian Church, St. Paul takes two grounds. He first points out the signs which will precede the second Advent: Self-idolatry, excluding the worship of God. Sinful humanity, "the man of sin," in the temple of God. And this self-worship deceiving by a show of godliness, and a power apparently miraculous (such as our present self-laudations, philanthropies, marvellous triumphs as with Divine power over the material world). Besides this, punishment of falsehood on the rejection of the true. These signs worked then and now. St. Paul discerned the general law of Christ's kingdom and its development as applicable to all epochs down to the last. But, next, St. Paul called the Church away from this feverishness to the real preparation for the Advent. The Church was on the tiptoe of expectation, and prepared in the way above described. St. Paul summons them to a real but not excited preparation.

And this in two things:—1. The love of God. 2. Patience of the saints. We consider—

I. Preparation for the Redeemer's coming: the love of God.

1. The love of God is the love of goodness. The old Saxon word God is identical with Good. God the Good One—personified goodness. There is in that derivation not a mere play of words—there is a deep truth. None loves God but he who loves good. To love God is to love what God is. God is Pure, and he who loves purity can love God. God is True. God is Just; and he who loves these things out of God may love them in God; and God for them, because He is good, and true, and pure, and just.

No other love is real; none else lasts. For example, love based on a belief of personal favours will not endure. You may be very happy, and believe that God has made you happy. While that happiness lasts you will love God. But a time comes when happiness goes. You will not be always young and prosperous. A time may come when misfortunes will accumulate on you as on Job. At last, Job had nothing left but life. The natural feeling would be, "Curse God and die." Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." Plainly Job had some other reason for his love than personal favours. God, the all-pure, all-just, all-holy, adorable, *because* all-holy. Or again, you believe that Christ's sufferings have purchased heaven for you. Well, you are grateful. But suppose your evidence of personal salvation fades, what then?

Here, however, let me make a remark. The love of goodness only becomes real by *doing* good. Without this it remains merely a sickly sentiment. It gets body and reality by acting. For example, we have been prating since the great Duke's death, of duty. Know we not that by merely *talking* of duty our profession of admiration for duty will become a cant? This is a truth a minister of Christ feels deeply. It is his business to be talking to others of self-sacrifice and devotedness. He of all men feels how little

these words mean, unless they are acted out. For an indolent habit of admiring goodness is got easily, and is utterly without profit. Hence, Christ says, "Not every man that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of My Father which is in heaven;" and hence, too, "If a man love Me, he will keep My commandments, and I will love him." "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." The love of goodness is real and healthy only when we *do* it.

2. The love of God is the love of man expanded and purified. It is a deep truth that we cannot begin with loving God, we must begin with loving man. It is an awful command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul and mind." It is awful and impossible at first. Interrogate the child's conscience, he does not love God supremely; he loves his mother, and his sister, and his brother more. Now this is God's plan of nature. Our special human affections are given to us to expand into a diviner Charity. We are learning "by a mortal yearning to ascend." Our affections wrap themselves round beings who are created in God's image; then they expand, widen in their range; become less absorbed, more calm, less passionate, more philanthropic. They become more pure, less selfish. Love was given, encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for this end— . . . that self might be annulled. The testimony of St. John is decisive on this point. To him we appeal as to the Apostle who knew best what love is. His love to God was unearthly, pure, spiritual; his religion had melted into love. Let us listen to his account. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

According to him, the thought of the invisible God is intolerable. It would be shorn of its dazzling splendour by being exhibited in our brethren. So we can gaze on the

reflected sunlight on the moon. According to him, it is through the visible that we appreciate the invisible—through the love of our brother that we grow into the love of God.

An awful Day is coming to us all—the Day of Christ. A Day of triumph, but of judgment too. Terrible language describes it, "The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood." God shall be felt as He never has been yet. How shall we prepare for that august sight? Not by unnatural, forced efforts at loving Him whom no eye can see and live; but by much persistence in the appointed path of our common affections, our daily intercourse, the talk man holds with man in the hourly walk of the world's intercourse. By being true to our attachments. Let not a humble Christian be over-anxious, if his spiritual affections are not as keen as he would wish. The love of God is the full-blown flower of which the love of man is the bud. To love man is to love God. To do good to man will be recognized hereafter as doing good to Christ. These are the Judge's words: "Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

3. Personal affections.

[Guard what is now said from any appearance of representing it as actually attained by the person who describes it. The love of God is a fearful and a lovely thing; but they who have reached it are the few.]

It is not merely love of goodness, but love of goodness concentrated on the Good One. Not merely the love of man, but the love of man expanded into the love of Him, of whom all that we have seen of gentle and lovely, of true and tender, of honourable and bright in human character, are but the shadows and the broken imperfect lights.

It is here that the Jewish religion is the chief trainer of the world. Revelation began with the personality of God. All the Jew's discipline taught him this: that the law of Right was the Will of a Lawgiver. Deliverance from

Egyptian slavery, or Assyrian invasion, was always associated with the Name of a Deliverer. Moses and the prophets were His messengers and mediators. "Thus saith the Lord," is ever the preface of their message.

Consequently, only from Jews, and Christians trained through the Old Testament to know God, do we hear those impassioned expressions of personal love, which give us a sublime conception of the adoration of which human hearts are capable. Let us hear David—"Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee." "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God." And that glorious outburst of St. Paul: "Let God be true, and every man a liar," which can be understood only by those who feel that the desertion of all, and the discovery of the falseness of all, would be as nothing compared with a single doubt of the faithfulness of God.

II. The other preparation is the patient waiting.

1. What is waited for?—an Advent of Christ. We must extend the ordinary meaning of this expression. There are many comings of Christ.

Christ came in the flesh as a Mediatorial Presence.

Christ came at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Christ came, a Spiritual Presence, when the Holy Ghost was given.

Christ comes now in every signal manifestation of redeeming power.

Any great Reformation of morals and religion is a Coming of Christ.

A great Revolution, like a thunderstorm, sweeping the evil away violently, to make way for the good, is a Coming of Christ.

Christ will come at the end of the world, when the Spirit of all these comings will be concentrated.

Thus we may understand in what way Christ is ever coming and ever near. Why it was that St. James said, "Stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth

nigh;" and, "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door." And we shall also understand how it was that the early Church was not deceived in expecting Christ in their own day. He *did* come, though not in the way they expected.

2. What is meant by "waiting"?

Now it is remarkable that throughout the Apostle's writings, the Christian attitude of soul is represented as an attitude of expectation—as in this passage, "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and again, "We are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience *wait* for it." Salvation in hope: that was their teaching. Not a perfection attained, but a perfection that is to be.

The Golden Age lies onwards. We are longing for, not the church of the Past, but the church of the Future. Ours is not an antiquated sentimental yearning for the imaginary perfection of ages gone by, not a conservative stagnation content with things as they are, but *Hope:*—for the Individual, and for the Society. By Him we have access by faith, and rejoice in hope of the glory that shall be revealed. A better, wiser, purer age than that of childhood. An age more enlightened and more holy than the world has yet seen. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." It is this spirit of expectation which is the preparation for the Advent. Every gift of noble origin is breathed upon by hope's perfect breath.

3. Let us note that it is *patient* waiting.

Every one who has ardently longed for any spiritual blessing knows the temptation to impatience in expecting it. Good men who, like Elijah, have sickened over the degeneracy and luxury of their times; fathers who have watched the obduracy and wild career of a child whom they have striven in vain to lead to God; such cry out from the deeps of the heart, "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Now the true preparation is, not having correct ideas of how and when He shall come but, being like Him. "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Application. "The Lord direct you" unto this.

Consider what the Thessalonians must have felt in their perplexity. Would that we had a Teacher such as St. Paul, ever at hand to tell us what is Truth—to distinguish between fanaticism and genuine enthusiasm—between wild false teaching and truth rejected by the many. "Here," might they have said, "were we bewildered. How shall we hereafter avoid similar bewilderments without an infallible guide?" Instead of which St. Paul says, "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ."

God has so decreed, that except in childhood, our dependence must be on our own souls. "The way of truth is slow, hard, winding, often turning on itself." Good and evil grow up in the field of the world almost inseparably. The scanning of error is necessary to the comprehension and belief of truth. Therefore it must be done solitarily. Nay, such an infallible guide could not be given to us without danger. Such an one ever near would prove not a guide to us, but a hindrance to the use of our own eyes and souls. Reverence for such a guide would soon degenerate into slavishness, passiveness, and prostration of mind.

Hence, St. Paul throws us upon God.

NOTES OF ADVENT LECTURES, No. 1

THE GREEK

ROMANS i. 14–17.—"I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

THE season of Advent commemorates three facts. 1. That the Lord has come. 2. That He is perpetually coming. 3. That He will yet come in greater glory than has yet appeared. And these are the three Advents—The first in the flesh, which is past: the second in the spirit: the third, His judgment Advent.

The first occupies our attention in these lectures.

We live surrounded by Christian institutions; breathe an atmosphere saturated by Christianity. It is exceedingly difficult even to imagine another state of things. In the enjoyment of domestic purity, it is difficult to conceive the debasing effects of polygamy: in the midst of political liberty to conceive of the blighting power of slavery: in scientific progress to imagine mental stagnation: in religious liberty and free goodness to fancy the reign of superstition.

Yet to realize the blessings of health, we must sit by the sick-bed: to feel what light is, we must descend into the mine and see the emaciated forms which dwindle away in darkness: to know what the blessing of sunshine is, go down into the valleys where stunted vegetation and dim vapours tell of a scene on which the sun scarcely shines two hours in the day. And to know what we have from Christianity, it is well to cast the eyes sometimes over the darkness from which the Advent of Christ redeemed us.

There are four departments of human nature spoken of in these verses, on which the Light shined. The Apostle felt that the Gospel was the power of God unto salvation to the Greeks, the Romans, the Barbarians, and the Jews. In the present lecture we consider Christianity presented to the Grecian character, and superseding the Grecian religion.

Four characteristics marked Grecian life and Grecian religion. Restlessness—Worldliness—The worship of the Beautiful—The worship of the Human.

I. Restlessness.

Polytheism divided the contemplation over many objects: and as the outward objects were manifold, so was there a want of unity in the inward life. The Grecian mind was distracted by variety. He was to obtain wisdom from one Deity: eloquence from that Mercurius for whom Paul was taken: purity from Diana for whom Ephesus was zealous: protection for his family or country from the respective tutelary deities: success by a prayer to Fortune.

Hence dissipation of mind: that fickleness for which the Greeks were famous: and the restless love of novelty which made Athens a place of literary and social gossip—"some new thing."

All stability of character rests on the contemplation of changeless unity.

So in modern science, which is eminently Christian, having exchanged the bold theorizing of ancient times for the patient humble willingness to be taught by the facts of nature, and performing its wonders by exact imitation of them: on the Christian principle—the Son of Man can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do.

And all the results of science have been to simplify and trace back the manifold to unity. Ancient science was only a number of insulated facts and discordant laws; modern science has gradually ranged these under fewer and ever fewer laws. It is ever tending towards unity of law.

For example—Gravitation. The planet's motion, and the motion of the atom of water that dashes tumultuously,

and as it seems lawlessly, down the foam of the cataract: the floating of the cork, the sinking of the stone, the rise of the balloon, and the curved flight of the arrow, are all brought under one single law—diverse and opposite as they seem.

Hence science is calm and dignified, reposing upon uniform fact. The philosopher's very look tells of repose, resting as he does, on a few changeless principles.

So also in religion. Christianity proclaimed "One God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Observe the effect in the case of two apostles. St. Paul's view of the Gospel contemplated it as an eternal divine purpose. *His* Gospel, the salvation of the Gentiles, was the eternal purpose which had been hidden from ages and generations. His own personal election was part of an eternal counsel. All the children of God had been predestinated before the creation "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself." Now see the effect on character. First, on veracity—2 Cor. i. 18, &c. He contemplated the changeless 'yea' of God—His own yea became fixed as God's—changeless, and calmly unalterable.

Again, in orthodoxy—"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Be not carried about by divers and strange doctrines. Truth is one—Error manifold—many opinions, yet there can be but one faith. See how calm and full of rest all this spirit is.

Now consider St. John. His view of the Gospel recognised it rather as the manifestation of love than the carrying out of the unity of an everlasting purpose. If you view the world as the Greek did, all is so various that you must either refer it to various deities, or to different modes of the same Deity. To-day you are happy—God is pleased: to-morrow miserable—God is angry. But St. John referred these all to unity of character—"God is love." Pain and pleasure, the sigh and smile, the sunshine and the storm, nay hell itself, to him were but the results of Eternal love.

Hence came deep calm—the repose which we are toiling all our lives to find, and which the Greek never found.

II. Worldliness.

There are men and nations to whom this world seems given as their province, as if they had no aspiration above it. If ever there was a nation who understood the science of living, it was the Grecian. They had organized social and domestic life—filled existence with comforts: knew how to extract from everything its greatest measure of enjoyment. This world was their home—this visible world was the object of their worship. Not like the orientals, who called all materialism bad, and whose highest object was to escape from it, "to be unclothed, not clothed upon," as St. Paul phrases it. The Greeks looked upon this world in its fallen state, and pronounced it all "very good."

The results were threefold.

1. Disappointment. Lying on the infinite bosom of nature, the Greek was yet unsatisfied. And there is an insatiable desire above all external forms and objects in man—all men—which they can never satisfy. Hence his craving too, like others, was from time to time, "Who will show us any good?" This dissatisfaction is exhibited in the parable of the prodigal, who is but the symbol of erring humanity. Away from his father's home, the famine came, and he fed on husks. Famine and husks are the world's unsatisfactoriness. A husk is a thing that seems full: is really hollow: which stays the appetite for a time, but will not support the life. And such is this world: leaving a hollowness at heart, staying our craving but for a time. He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again. And the worldly man is trying to satiate his immortal hunger upon husks.

Second result.—Degradation. Religion aims at an ideal life above this actual one—to found a divine polity—a kingdom of God—a church of the best. And the life of worldliness pronounces this world to be all. This is to be adorned and beautified. Life as it is. Had you asked the Greek his highest wish, he would have replied, "This world, if it could only last—I ask no more." Immortal youth—and this bright existence. This is to feed on husks; but "husks which the swine did eat." No degradation to the swine, for

it is their nature; but degradation to man to rest in the outward, visible, and present, for the bosom of God is his home. The Greek, therefore, might be, in his own language, "a reasoning animal," but not one of the children of Heaven.

Third result.—Disbelief in Immortality. The more the Greek attached himself to this world, the more the world unseen became a dim world of shades. The earlier traditions of the deep-thinking orientals, which his forefathers brought from Asia, died slowly away; and any one who reminded him of them was received as one would now be who were to speak of purgatory. The cultivated Athenians were for the most part sceptics in the time of Christ. Accordingly, when Paul preached at Athens the resurrection of the dead, they "mocked."

This bright world was all. Its revels—its dances—its theatrical exhibitions—its races—its baths—and academic groves, where literary leisure luxuriated,—these were blessedness; and the Greek's hell was death. Their poets speak pathetically of the misery of the wrench from all that is dear and bright. The dreadfulness of death is one of the most remarkable things that meet us in those ancient writings.

And these men were startled by seeing a new sect rise up to whom death was nothing—who almost courted it. They heard an Apostle say at Miletus: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy." For the cross of Christ had crucified in their hearts the Grecian's world. To them life was honour, integrity, truth; that is the soul: to this all other was to be sacrificed. This was the proper self, which could only die by sin, by denying its own existence. The rise of the higher life had made this life nothing, "and delivered those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject unto bondage."

Appeal to the worldly minded. Melancholy spectacle! Men and women shutting out the idea of death,—the courtesies of society concealing from them the mention of their age, by all false appliances of dress, &c., &c., and

staying the appearance of the hand of time. You must die. The day will come, and the coffin. Life in God alone robs that thought of dreadfulness: when the resurrection being begun within, you can look upon the decay of the outward man, and feel *I* am not dying.

III. The worship of the Beautiful.

The Greek saw this world almost only on its side of beauty. His name for it was Kosmos, divine order or regularity. He looked at actions in the same way. One and the same adjective expressed the noble and the beautiful. If he wanted to express a perfect man, he called him a musical or harmonious man.

What was the consequence? Religion degenerated into the arts. All the immortal powers of man were thrown upon the production of a work of the imagination. The artist who had achieved a beautiful statue was almost worshipped. The poet who had produced a noble poem was the prophet of the nation. The man who gave the richest strains of melody was half divine. This was their inspiration. The arts became religion, and religion ended in the arts.

Hence, necessarily, sensuality became religious; because all feelings produced by these arts, chiefly the voluptuous ones, were authorized by religion. There is a peculiar danger in refinement of sensuous enjoyments. Coarse pleasures disgust, and pass for what they are; but who does not know that the real danger and triumph of voluptuousness are when it approaches the soul veiled under the drapery of elegance?—They fancied themselves above the gross multitude: but their sensuality, disguised even from themselves, was sensuality still—ay, and at times even, in certain festivals, broke out into gross and unmistakable licentiousness.

And hence the greatest of the Greeks in his imaginary Republic banished from that perfect state all the strains which were soft and enfeebling—all the poems that represented any deeds of Deities unworthy of the Divine—all the

statues which could suggest one single feeling of impurity. Himself a worshipper of the purest beautiful, it was yet given to his all but inspired heart, to detect the lurking danger before which Greece was destined to fall—the approach of sensuality through the worship of the graceful and the refined.

There is this danger now. Men are awakened from coarse rude life to the desire of something deeper. And the God or Spirit of this world can subtly turn that aside into channels which shall effectually enfeeble and ruin the soul. Refinement—melting imagery—dim religious light: all the witchery of form and colour—music—architecture: all these, even coloured with the hues of religion, producing feelings either religious or quasi-religious, may yet do the world's work. For all attempt to impress the heart through the senses, "to make perfect through the flesh," is fraught with that danger beneath which Greece sunk. There is a self-deception in those feelings: the thrill—and the sense of mystery—and the luxury of contemplation—and the impressions on the senses: all these lie very close to voluptuousness—enfeeblement of heart—yea, even impurity.

This, too, is the ruinous effect of an education of accomplishments. The education of the taste, and the cultivation of the feelings in undue proportion, destroys the masculine tone of mind. An education chiefly romantic or poetical, not balanced by hard practical life, is simply the ruin of the soul.

If any one ever felt the beauty of this world it was He. The beauty of the lily nestling in the grass—He felt it all: but the Beauty which He exhibited in life was the stern loveliness of moral action. The King in His Beauty "had no form or comeliness:" it was the beauty of obedience—of noble deeds—of unconquerable fidelity—of unswerving truth—of Divine self-devotion. The Cross! the Cross! We must have something of iron and hardness in our characters. The Cross tells us that is the true Beautiful which is Divine: an inward, not an outward beauty, which rejects and turns sternly away from the meretricious forms

of the outward world, which have a corrupting or debilitating tendency.

IV. The worship of Humanity.

The Greek had strong human feelings and sympathies. He projected his own self on nature: humanized it: gave a human feeling to clouds, forests, rivers, seas.

In this he was a step above other idolatries. The Hindoo, for instance, worshipped monstrous emblems of physical power. Might: gigantic masses: hundred-handed deities, scarcely human, you find in Hindostan. In Egypt, again, Life was the thing sacred. Hence all that had life was in a way divine: the sacred ibis, crocodile, bull, cat, snake. All that produced and all that ended life. Hence death too was sacred. The Egyptian lived in the contemplation of death. His coffin was made in his lifetime; his ancestors embalmed: the sacred animals preserved in myriad heaps through generations in mummy pits. The sovereign's tomb was built to last for not centuries but thousands of years.

The Greek was above this. It was not merely power, but human power: not merely beauty, but human beauty: not merely life, but human life, which was the object of his profoundest veneration. His effort therefore was, in his conception of his god, to realize a beautiful human being. And not the animal beauty of the human only: but the intelligence which informs and shines through beauty. All his life he was moulding into shape visions of earth—a glorious human being. Light under the conditions of humanity: the "sun in human limbs arrayed" was the central object of Grecian worship.

Much in this had a germ of truth—more was false. This principle, which is true, was evidently stated: The Divine, under the limitations of humanity, is the only worship of which man is capable. Demonstrably: for man cannot conceive that which is not in his own mind. He may worship what is below himself, or that which is in himself resembling God; but attributes of which from his own nature he has no conception, he clearly cannot adore.

The only question therefore is, *What* he shall reckon divine and in alliance with God? If power, then he worships as the Hindoo—If life, then as the Egyptian—If physical and intellectual beauty, then as the Greek.

Observe—they wanted some living image of God containing something more truly divine to supplant their own. For still, in spite of their versatile and multifarious conceptions, the illimitable Unknown remained: to which an altar stood in Athens. They wanted humanity in its glory—they asked for a Son of Man.

Christ is Deity under the limitations of Humanity. But there is presented in Christ for worship, not power: nor beauty: nor physical life: but the moral image of God's perfections. Through the heart, and mind, and character of Jesus it was that the Divinest streamed. Divine *character*, that was given in Christ to worship.

Another error. The Greek worshipped *all* that was in man. Every feeling had its beauty, and its divine origin. Hence Thieving had its patron deity: and Treachery, and Cunning: and Lust had its temple erected for abominable worship. All that was human had its sanction in the example of some god.

Christ corrects. Not all that is human is divine. There is a part of our nature kindred with God: the strengthening of that, by mixture with God's spirit, is our true and proper humanity—regeneration of soul. There is another part whereby we are related to the brutes: our animal propensities: our lower inclinations: our corrupted will. And whoever lives in that, and strengthens that, sinks not to the level of the brutes, but below them, to the level of the demons: for he uses an immortal spirit to degrade himself: and the immortal joined with evil, as the life to the body, is demoniacal.

In conclusion, remark: In all this system one thing was wanting—the sense of sin. The Greek worshipped the beautiful—adored the human—deified the world: of course this worship found no place for sin. The Greek would not have spoken to you of sin: he would have told you of

departure from a right line; want of moral harmony: discord within: he would have said that the music of your soul was out of tune. Christ came to convince the world of sin. And after Him that deep cloud began to brood upon the hearts of Christendom which rests upon the conscience which has been called into vitality of action and susceptibility.

For this Greece had no remedy. The universe has no remedy but one. There is no prescription for the sickness of the heart, but that which is written in the Redeemer's blood.

SECOND ADVENT LECTURE

THE ROMAN

ROMANS i. 14–16.—"I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

THE Advent of Christ is the gulf which separates ancient from modern history. The dates B.C. and A.D. are not arbitrary but real division. His coming is the crisis of the world's history. It was the moment from whence light streamed into the realms of darkness, and life descended into the regions of the grave. It was the new birth of worn-out humanity.

Last Thursday, we considered the effects of this Advent on Greece. We found the central principle of Grecian life to be worldliness. The Greek saw, sought, and worshipped nothing higher than this life, but only this life itself. Hence Greek religion degenerated into mere Taste,

which is perception of the Beautiful. The result on character was threefold :—Restlessness, which sent the Greek through this world with his great human heart unsatisfied, fickle in disposition, and ever inquiring, with insatiable curiosity, after some new thing. Licentiousness ; for whosoever attaches his heart to the outward Beauty, without worshipping chiefly in it that moral Beauty of which all else is but the type and suggestion, necessarily, slowly it may be, but inevitably, sinks down and down into the deepest abyss of sensual existence. Lastly, Unbelief. The Greek, seeing principally this world, lost his hold upon the next. For the law of faith is, that a man can only believe what is already in his spirit. He believes as he is. The Apostle Paul writes in astonishment to these Greeks (of Corinth), "How say some among you there is no resurrection of the dead?" But the thing was explicable. Paul was "dying daily." The outward life decayed : the inner grew and lived with more vitality every day. He *felt* the life to come in which he believed. But the Corinthians, leading an easy, luxurious life, How could it be a reality to them? How could *they* believe in immortality, in whom the immortal scarcely stirred, or only feebly?

To these the apostle felt bound to preach the living Gospel. "I am debtor to the Greeks."

To-day, we turn to the Roman nation, its religion, and its life. At the time of which the New Testament speaks, Greece had been nearly a century and a half a province of Rome. In the language of Daniel, the kingdom of brass had given way to the kingdom of iron. The physical might of Rome had subdued Greece, but the mind of Greece had mastered Rome. The Greeks became the teachers of their conquerors. The Deities of Greece were incorporated into the national faith of Rome. Greek literature became the education of the Roman youth. Greek philosophy was almost the only philosophy the Roman knew. Rome adopted Grecian arts, and was insensibly moulded by contact with Grecian life. So that the world in name and government was Roman, but in feeling and civilization Greek.

If therefore, we would understand Roman life, we must contemplate it at an earlier period, when it was free from Greek influence, and purely exhibited its own idiosyncracies.

The nation which we contemplate to-day was a noble one—humanly, one of the noblest that the world has seen. Next to the Jewish, the very highest. We may judge from the fact of St. Paul's twice claiming his Roman citizenship, and feeling the indignation of a Roman citizen at the indignity of chastisement. And this too, in an age when the name had lost its brightness: when a luxurious, wealthy Greek could purchase his freedom. Claudius Lysias bought it "with a large sum of money." And yet we may conceive what it had been once, when even the faint lustre of its earlier dignity could inspire a foreigner, and that foreigner a Jew, and that Jew a Christian, with such respect.

At the outset, then, we have a rare and high-minded people and their life, to think of. They who have imbibed the spirit of its writers from their youth can neither speak nor think of it without enthusiasm. Scarcely can we forbear it even in the pulpit. Nor is this an unchristian feeling, earthly, to be checked: for, in order to elevate Christianity, it is not necessary to vilify heathenism. To exalt revelation, we need not try to show that natural religion has no truths. To exhibit the blessings of the Advent, it is not needful to demonstrate that man was brutalized without it. It is a poor, cowardly system which can only rise by the degradation of all others. Whatever is true belongs to the kingdom of the Truth. The purer the creed—the higher the character—the nobler the men who, without revelation, signally failed at last, the more absolute is the necessity of a Redeemer, and the more are we constrained to refer, gratefully, all blessings to His Advent.

We take three points:—the public and private life of Rome, and its moral and inevitable decay at last.

I. The public life of Rome.

First, I notice the spirit of its religion. The very word shows what that was. *Religion*, a Roman word, means obligation, a binding power. Very different from the corresponding Greek expression, which implies worship by a sensuous ceremonial (threskeia).

The Roman began, like the Jew, from Law. He started from the idea of Duty. But there was an important difference. The Jew was taught duty or obedience to the Law of a personal, holy God. The Roman obeyed, as his Etruscan ancestors taught him, a Fate or Will; and with very different results. But at present we only observe the lofty character of the early religion which resulted from such a starting-point.

The early history of Rome is wrapped in fable; but the fable itself is worth much, as preserving the spirit of the old life when it does not preserve the facts. Accordingly, the tradition taught that the building of Rome was done in obedience to the intimations of the Will of Heaven. It was rebuilt in a site selected not by human prudence, but by a voice divinely guided. Its first great legislator (Numa) is represented as giving laws, not from a human heart, but after secret communion with the Superhuman. It was the belief of Roman writers that the early faith taught access to God only through the mind: that therefore no images, but only temples, were found in Rome during the first two centuries of her existence. No bloody sacrifices defiled the city. War itself was a religious act; solemnly declared by a minister of religion, casting a spear into the enemy's territory. Nay, we even find something in spirit resembling the Jewish sabbath: the command that during the rites of religion no traffic should go on, nor workman's hammer break the consecrated silence, but that men should devoutly contemplate God.

Here was a high, earnest, severe Religion.

Now this resulted in Government, as its highest earthly expression. Duty: and therefore Law on earth, as a copy of the Will of Heaven. Different nations seem, consciously

or unconsciously, destined by God to achieve different missions. The Jew had the highest: to reveal to the world Holiness. The Oriental stands as a witness to the reality of the Invisible above the Visible. The Greek reminded the world of Eternal Beauty; and the destiny of the Roman seems to have been to stamp upon the minds of mankind the ideas of Law, Government, Order.

Beauty was not the object of the Roman contemplation, nor worship; nor was harmony. The taste for them might be taught, superinduced; but it was not natural. It was not indigenous to the soil of his nature. Hence, when Greece was reduced to a Roman province, in 146 B.C., the Roman soldiers took the noblest specimens of Grecian painting and converted them into gambling-tables.

You may distinguish the difference of the two characters from the relics which they have left behind them. The Greek produced a statue or a temple, the expression of a sentiment. The Roman, standing upon visible Fact, dealing with the practical, and living in the actual life of men, has left behind him works of public usefulness: noble roads which intersect empires—mighty aqueducts—bridges—enormous excavations for draining cities at which we stand astonished: and, above all, that system of Law, the slow result of ages of experience, which has so largely entered into the modern jurisprudence of most European nations.

One of their own writers has distinctly recognised this destiny (Virgil). "It is for others to work brass into breathing shape—others may be more eloquent—or describe the circling movements of the heavens, and tell the rising of the stars. Thy work, O Roman! is to rule the nations: these be thine acts: to impose the conditions of the world's peace: to show mercy to the fallen: and to crush the proud."

In accordance with this, it is a characteristic fact that we find the *institutions* of Rome referred to inspiration. Not a decalogue of private duties; but a code of municipal laws. And, turning to the page of Scripture, whenever the Roman

comes prominently forward, we always find him the organ of law, the instrument of public rule and order. Pilate has no idea of condemning unjustly: "Why, what evil hath He done?" But he yields at the mention of the source of Law, the Emperor. The Apostle Paul appeals to Cæsar: and even a corrupt Festus respects the appeal: "Unto Cæsar shalt thou go." Nor could even the prisoner's innocence reverse his own appeal: "This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar." The tumult at Ephesus is stilled by a hint of Roman interference: "We are in danger of being called in question for this day's uproar." When the angry crowd at Athens, and the equally angry mob of the Sanhedrim, was about to destroy Paul, again the Roman, Claudius Lysias, comes "with an army, and rescues him."

It was always the same thing. The Roman seems almost to have existed to exhibit on earth a copy of the Divine order of the universe, the law of the heavenly hierarchies.

II. Private Life.

We observed the sanctity of the domestic ties. Very touching are all the well-known anecdotes. That, for instance, of the noble Roman matron, who felt, all spotless as she was, life-dishonoured, and died by her own hand. The sacredness of Home was expressed strongly by the idea of twofold guardian deities (Lares and Penates) who watched over it. A Roman's own fireside and hearthstone were almost the most sacred spots on earth. There was no battle-cry that came so to his heart as that, "For the altar and the hearth." How firmly this was rooted in the nation's heart is plain from the tradition, that for 170 years no separation took place by law between those who had been once united in wedlock.

There is deep importance in this remark; for it was to this that Rome owed her greatness. The whole fabric of the Commonwealth rose out of the family. The family was the nucleus round which all the rest agglomerated. First the family: then the clan, made up of the family and its

dependents or clients: then the tribe: lastly, the nation. And so the noble structure of the Roman Commonwealth arose, compacted and mortised together, but resting on the foundation of the hearthstone.

Very different is it in the East. A nation there is a collection of units, held together by a government. There is a principle of cohesion in them: but only such cohesion as belongs to the column of sand, supported by the whirlwind: when the blast ceases, the atoms fall asunder. When the chief is slain or murdered, the nation is in anarchy—the family does not exist. Polygamy and infanticide, the bane of domestic life, are the destruction too, of national existence.

There is a solemn lesson in this. Moral decay in the family is the invariable prelude to public corruption. It is a false distinction which we make between public integrity and private honour. The man whom you cannot admit into your family, whose morals are corrupt, cannot be a pure statesman. Whoever studies history will be profoundly convinced that a nation stands or fall with the sanctity of its domestic ties. Rome mixed with Greece, and learned her morals. The Goth was at her gates; but she fell not till she was corrupted and tainted at the heart. The domestic corruption preceded the political. When there was no longer purity on her hearthstones, nor integrity in her senate, then, and not till then, her death-knell was rung.

We will bless God for our English homes. Partly the result of our religion. Partly the result of the climate which God has given us, according to the law of compensation by which physical evil is repaid by moral blessing; so that, its gloom and darkness making life more necessarily spent within doors than it is among continental nations, our life is domestic and theirs is social. When England shall learn domestic maxims from strangers, as Rome from Greece, her ruin is accomplished. And this blessing, too, comes from Christ—who presided at the marriage feast at Cana, who found a home in the family of Nazareth, and consecrated the hearthstone with everlasting inviolability.

Let us break up this private life into particulars.

1. We find manly courage. This too is preserved in a word. Virtue is a Roman word—manhood, courage; for courage, manhood, virtue, were one word. Words are fossil thoughts: you trace the ancient feeling in that word—you trace it, too, in the corruption of the word. Among the degenerate descendants of the Romans, *virtue* no longer means manhood: it is simply dilettantism. The decay of life exhibits itself in the debasement even of words.

We dwell on this courage, because it was not merely animal daring. Like everything Roman, it was connected with religion. It was duty: obedience to will: self-surrender to the public good. The Roman legions subdued the world: but it was not their discipline alone; nor their strength; nor their brute daring. It was rather, far, their moral force—a nation whose legendary and historical heroes could thrust their hand into the flame, and see it consumed without a nerve shrinking: or come from captivity on parole, advise their countrymen against peace, and then go back to torture and certain death: or devote themselves by solemn self-sacrifice (like the Decii), who could bid sublime defiance to pain and count dishonour the only evil. The world must bow before such men; for, unconsciously, here was a form of the spirit of the cross: Self-surrender, unconquerable fidelity to duty, sacrifice for others. And so far as Rome had in her that spirit, and so long as she had it, her career was the career of all those who in any form, even the lowest, take up the Cross: she went forth conquering and to conquer.

2. Deep as Roman greatness was rooted in the courage of her men, it was rooted deeper still in the honour of her women. I take one significant fact, which exhibits national feeling. There was a fire in Rome called Eternal, for ever replenished. It was the type and symbol of the duration of the Republic. This fire was tended by the Vestals: a beautifully significant institution. It implied that the duration of Rome was co-extensive with the preservation of her purity of morals. So long as the dignity of her matrons

and her virgins remained unsullied, so long she would last. No longer. Female chastity guarded the Eternal City.

Here we observe something anticipative of Christianity. In the earlier ages after the Advent there were divine honours paid to the Queen of Heaven: and the land was covered over with houses set apart for celibacy. Of course, rude and gross minds can find plenty to sneer at in that institution: and doubtless the form of the truth was mistaken enough, as all *mere* forms of doctrine are. But the heart of truth which lay beneath all that superstition was a precious one. It was this. So long as purity of heart, delicacy of feeling, chastity of life, are found in a nation, so long that nation is great—no longer. Personal purity is the divinest thing in man and woman. It is the most sacred truth which the church of Christ is commissioned to exhibit and proclaim.

Upon these virtues I observe:—The Roman was conspicuous for the virtues of this earth. Honour, fidelity, courage, chastity, all manliness; yet the apostle felt that he had a Gospel to preach to them that were in Rome also. Moral virtues are not religious graces. There are two classes of excellence. There are men whose lives are full of moral principle, and there are others whose feelings are strongly devotional. And, strange to say, each of these is found at times disjoined from the other. Men of almost spotless earthly honour, who scarcely seem to know what reverence for things heavenly and devout aspirations towards God mean. Men who have the religious instinct, pray with fervour, kindle with spiritual raptures, and yet are impure in their feelings, and fail in matters of common truth and honesty. Each of these is but a half man: dwarfed and stunted in his spiritual growth. The "perfect man in Christ Jesus," who has grown to the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ," is he who has united these two things: who, to the high Roman virtues which adorn this earth, has added the sublimer feelings which are the investiture of heaven: in whom "justice, mercy, truth," are but the body of which the soul is faith and love.

Yet observe—these are moral virtues, and morality is not religion. Still, beware of depreciating them. Beware of talking contemptuously of "mere morality." If we must choose between two things which ought never to be divided, moral principle and religious sentiment, there is no question which most constitutes the character "which is not far from the kingdom of heaven." Devout feelings are common enough in childhood: religious emotions: religious warmth: instances of which are retailed by the happy parent: common enough, too, in grown men and women—but listen—those devout feelings, separate from high principle, do not save from immorality: nay, I do believe, are the very stepping-stone towards it. When the sensual is confounded with and mistaken for the spiritual; and merely devout warmth is the rich, rank soil of heart in which moral evil most surely and most rankly grows—you will not easily build Roman virtues upon *that*. But high principle, which is in other words, the baptism of John, is the very basis on which is most naturally raised the superstructure of religious faith. Happy, thrice happy he who begins with the law and ends with the gospel.

III. The decline of Roman life.

1. First came corruption of the moral character. The Roman worldliness was of a kind far higher than the Grecian. In his way the Roman really had the world's good at heart. There was a something invisible at which he aimed. Invisible justice—invisible order—invisible right. Still it was only the law on earth: the well-being of this existence. And whatever is only of this earth is destined to decay. The soul of the Roman, bent on this world's affairs, became secularized, then animalized, and so at last, when there was little left to do, pleasure became his aim, as it had been the Grecian's. Then came ruin swiftly. When the emperors lived for their elaborately contrived life of luxury—when the Roman soldier left his country's battles to be fought by mercenaries—the doom of Rome was sealed. Yet, because it was a nobler worldliness, less sensual and less selfish, the

struggle with decay was more protracted than in Greece. Lofty spirits rose to stem the tide of corruption; and the death-throes of Rome were long and terrible. She ran a mighty career of a thousand years.

2. Scepticism and infidelity went hand in hand.—An example of the former we have in Pilate's question, "What is truth?" An example of the latter in the superstitious belief of the inhabitants of Lystra, that Paul and Barnabas were "Gods come to them in the likeness of men." And this probably was a tolerably accurate picture of the state of Roman feeling. The lower classes sunk in a debased superstition,—the educated classes, too intellectual to believe in it, and yet having nothing better to put in its stead. Or perhaps there was also a superstition which is only another name for scepticism: infidelity trembling at its self: shrinking from its own shadow. There is a fearful question for which the soul must find an answer: the mystery of its own being and destinies. Men looked into their own souls, and listening, heard only an awful silence there. No response came from the world without. Philosophy had none to give. And then men, terrified at the progress of infidelity, more than half distrusting their own tendencies, took refuge in adding superstition to superstition. They brought in the gods of Greece, and Egypt, and the East: as if multiplying the objects of reverence strengthened the spirit of reverence in the soul; as if every new sacredness was a barrier between them and the dreadful abyss of uncertainty into which they did not dare to look.

This is as true now as then. Superstition is the refuge of a sceptical spirit, which has a heart too devout to dare to be sceptical. Men tremble at new theories, new views, the spread of infidelity: and they think to fortify themselves against these by multiplying the sanctities which they reverence. But all this will not do. Superstition cannot do the work of faith, and give repose or peace. It is not by multiplying ceremonies—it is not by speaking of holy things low, with bated breath—it is not by intrenching the soul behind the infallibility of a church, or the infallibility

of the words and sentences of a book—it is not by shutting out inquiry, and resenting every investigation as profane, that you can arrest the progress of infidelity. Faith, not superstition, is the remedy.

There is a grand Fearlessness in Faith. He who in his heart of hearts reverences the Good—the True—the Holy; that is, reverences God—does not tremble at the apparent success of attacks upon the outworks of his faith. They may shake those who rested on those outworks—they do not move him, whose soul reposes on the Truth itself. He needs no props or crutches to support his faith. He does not need to multiply the objects of his awe in order to keep dreadful doubt away. Founded on a Rock, Faith can afford to gaze undismayed at the approaches of Infidelity.

3. In Rome, religion degenerated into allegiance to the state. In Greece, as it has been truly said, it ended in taste. In Rome it closed with the worship of the emperor. Nothing shows the contrast between Greek and Roman feeling more strongly than this. In Greece, the poet became the prophet, and the artist was the man divinely inspired. In Rome, the deification of the emperor, as the symbol of government, was the point towards which, unsuspectedly, but by a sure and inevitable consecutiveness, the national feeling for ages had been tending.

And the distinction between the Christian and the Roman tone of feeling is no less strikingly contrasted in the very same allegiance. Sacrament perhaps is the highest word of symbolical life in both. It is a Roman word. In Rome it meant an oath of allegiance to the senate and Roman people. Nothing higher the Roman knew. In the Christian Church it is also the oath of highest fidelity; but its import there is this: "Here we offer and present unto Thee, *O Lord*, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a living sacrifice."

In this contrast of the sacramental vows, as I have remarked before, were perceptible the different tendencies of the two starting points of revealed religion and Roman.

Judaism began from law or obligation to a holy person. Roman religion began from obedience to a mere will. Judaism ended in Christianity; whose central principle is joyful surrender to One whose Name is Love. The religion of Rome ended, among the nobler, as Cato and the Antonines, in the fatalism of a sublime but loveless Stoicism, whose essential spirit is submission to a Destiny: among the ordinary men, in mere zeal for the state, more or less earthly. It stiffened into Stoicism, or degenerated into public spirit.

4. The last step we notice is the decline of Religion into Expediency. It is a startling thing to see men protecting popular superstitions which they despise: taking part with solemn gravity in mummeries which in their heart they laugh at. Yet such, we are told, was the state of things in Rome. It is a trite and often quoted observation of a great Roman, that one minister of religion could scarcely meet another without a smile upon his countenance, indicating consciousness of a solemn mockery. And an instance of this, I believe, we have in the Acts of the Apostles. The town-clerk or magistrate of Ephesus stilled the populace by a kind of accommodation to their prejudices, much in the same way in which a nurse would soothe a passionate child. Apparently, as we are told, he belonged to the friends of Paul; and we can scarcely forbear a smile at the solemn gravity with which he assures the people that there could be no doubt that the image fell down from Jupiter: no question throughout all Asia and the world about the greatness of the "great goddess Diana."

For there were cultivated minds which had apprehended some of the truths of Christianity: philosophers who were enlightened far beyond their age. But a line of martyred philosophers had made them cautious. They made a compromise. They enjoyed their own light, kept silence, and left the rest in darkness. The result was destruction of their own moral being; for the law of truth is that it cannot be shut up without becoming a dead thing, and mortifying the whole nature. Not the truth which a man knows, but that

which he says and lives, becomes the soul's life. Truth cannot bless except when it is lived for, proclaimed and suffered for.

This was the plan of the enlightened when the Saviour came. And this is the lowest step of a nation's fall, when the few who know the truth refuse to publish it. When governments patronize superstition as a mere engine for governing: when the ministers of religion only half believe the dogmas which they teach, dare not even say to one another what they feel and what they doubt, when they dare not be true to their convictions, for fear of an Ephesian mob.

Therefore it was necessary that One should come into the world who should be True: The Truest of all that are woman-born: whose life was Truth: who from Everlasting had been The Truth. It was necessary that He should come to preach the gospel to the poor, to dare to say to the people truths which the philosophers dared not say, and other truths of which no philosopher had ever dreamed. The penalty of that true Life was the sacrifice which is the world's Atonement. Men saw the Mortal die. But others saw the Immortal rise to take His place at the right hand of Power: and the spirit which has been streaming out ever since from that Life and Death is the world's present Light, and shall be its everlasting Life.

THIRD ADVENT LECTURE

THE BARBARIAN

Acts xxviii. 1–7.—"And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. And the barbarous people showed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the Barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but, after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously."

Of the four divisions of the world at the time of the Advent, two have already been reviewed. The Greek, seeing the right only on its side of beauty, ended in mere intellectual refinement. The artist took the place of God, and genius stood for inspiration. The Roman's destiny was different. His was not the kingdom of burnished brass, but the kingdom of iron. He set out with the great idea of Duty and Law: exhibited in consequence the austere simplicity of pure domestic life, in public affairs Government and Order: stamping upon the world the great idea of Obedience to Law. In the decline of Rome the results of this were manifest. After a mighty career of a thousand years, Rome had run out her course. Among the loftier minds who stood out protesting against her corruption, and daring in a corrupted age to believe in the superiority of Right to enjoyment, grand contempt for pleasure, sublime defiances of pain told out the dying agonies of the iron kingdom, worthy of the heart of steel which beat beneath the Roman's robe. This was Stoicism: the Grecian philo-

sophy which took deepest root, as might have been expected, in the soil of Roman thought. Stoicism was submission to a destiny: hard, rigid, loveless submission. Its language was Must—It must be, and man's highest manliness is to submit to the inevitable. It is right because it must be so. Besides these higher ones, there were others who carried out the idea of Duty in quite another direction. With the mass of the nation, reverence for Law passed into homage to the symbol of Law; loyalty to the government: its highest expression being the sacramental homage to the nation's authority. So that, as I have already said, the Roman spirit stiffened into stoicism, and degenerated into worship of the emperor. This was not accidental, it was the inevitable result of the Idea. It might have taken half the time: or ten times as long: but at last the germ must have ripened into that fruit and no other. The Roman began with obedience to Will.

Law, meaning obedience to a holy God, passes by a natural transition into the gospel: that is, reverential duty to a person becomes the obedience of love at last, which obeys because the beautifulness of obedience is perceived. The Jew began in severity: ended in beauty. The Roman began in severity: ended in rigidity; or else relaxation. To him the Advent came proclaiming the Lord of Love instead of the coercive necessity of a lifeless fate.

To the Greek worshipper of beauty, the Advent came with an announcement of an inner beauty. He who was to them, and all such, "a Root out of a dry ground, with no form or comeliness," with nothing to captivate a refined taste, or gratify an elegant sensibility, lived a life which was divine and beautiful. His religion, as contrasted with the Grecian, supplementing it, and confirming in it what was true, "was the worship of the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness."

The third department is the necessity of the Advent for the *Barbarian* world.

By Barbarian was meant any religion but the Roman or the Greek—a contemptuous term, the spirit of which is common enough in all ages. Just as now every narrow

sect monopolizes God, claims for itself an exclusive heaven, contemptuously looks on all the rest of mankind as sitting in outer darkness, and complacently consigns myriads whom God has made to His uncovenanted mercies, that is, to probable destruction: so in ancient times, the Jew scornfully designated all nations but his own as Gentiles: and the Roman and Greek, each retaliating in his way, treated all nations but his own under the common epithet of Barbarians.

We shall confine ourselves to-day to a single case of Barbarian life. We shall not enter into the religion of our own ancestors, the Kelts and Teutonic nations, who were barbarians then: nor that of the Scythians or the Africans. One instance will be sufficient.

Twice in his recorded history, St. Paul came in contact with Barbarians—twice he was counted as a god. Once among the semi-barbarians of Lycaonia, at Lystra—once here at Melita.

There is a little uncertainty about the identification of this Melita. It was a name shared by two islands—Malta, and Melida in the Adriatic. But it seems to be established beyond all reasonable doubt that it was on Malta, not on Melida, that St. Paul was wrecked. The chief objection to this view is, that immediately before the wreck we are told—chap. xxvii. 27—that they were "driven up and down in Adria." But this is satisfactorily answered by the fact, that the name Adriatic was applied often loosely to all the sea round Sicily. Two great arguments in favour of Malta then remain: After leaving the island, the apostle touched at Syracuse, and so went on to Rhegium and Puteoli. This is the natural direction from Malta to Rome, but not from Melida. Then, besides, "barbarians" will not apply to the inhabitants of Melida. They were Greeks: whereas the natives of Malta, living under Roman government, were originally Carthaginians, who had been themselves a Phœnician colony. The epithet is perfectly correct as applied to them.

It is the Carthaginian or Phœnician religion, then, which

moulded the barbarian life, that we examine to-day. We take three points.

I. Barbarian virtues.
II. Barbarian idea of retribution.
III. Barbarian conception of Deity.

I. Barbarian virtues.

Two errors have been held on the subject of natural goodness. The first, that of those who deny to fallen man any goodness at all; and refuse to admit even kindliness of feeling. In the language of a celebrated and popular expounder of this view, "man in his natural state is one-half beast and one-half devil." This is the effect of a system. No man in his heart believes that. No mother ever gazed upon her child, baptized or unbaptized, and thought so. Men are better than their creed. Their hearts are more than a match for their false theological system. Beneath the black skin of the African there runs a blood as warm as that which is in the blue veins of the Christian. Among the civilized heathen, the instinctive feelings are as kindly and as exquisitely delicate as they were ever found in the bosom of the baptized. Accordingly, we find here these natural barbarian virtues of hospitality and sympathy. The shipwrecked mariners, wet and cold, were received in Melita with a warm, compassionate welcome. The people of the island did not *say*, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled." They gave them those things which were necessary for the body. And a Christian contemplating this, gave this distinct testimony, "The barbarous people showed us no little kindness."

The second error is the opposite one of placing too high a value on these natural virtues. There is a class of writers who talk much of early unsophisticated times. They tell of the days "when wild in woods the noble savage ran." They speak of pastoral simplicity, and the reverence and piety of mountain-life. According to them, civilization is the great corrupter. But the truth is, the natural good feelings of human nature are only instincts: no more moral than a

long sight or a delicate sense of hearing. The keen feelings of the child are no guarantee of future principle: perhaps rather the reverse. The profuse hospitality of the mountaineer, who rarely sees strangers, and to whom gold is little worth, becomes shrewd and selfish calculation so soon as temptation from passing traffic is placed in his way. You may travel among savages who treat you, as a stranger, with courtesy: but yet feed on the flesh of their enemies. And these Melitans, who "showed no little kindness" to the wrecked crew, belonged to a stock who, in the most civilized days of Carthage, offered human sacrifice, and after every successful battle with the Romans, burnt the chief prisoners alive as a thank-offering to heaven. If we trace them still further back, we find their Phœnician ancestors in the Old Testament tainted with the same practice, and the Hebrews themselves imbibing it from them, so as to be perpetually arraigned by their prophets on the charge of making their sons and daughters "pass through the fire to Baal." They could be kind to strangers: and cruel to enemies.

The Advent of Christ brought a new spirit into the world. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." That was not the new part. The Melitans would not have disagreed with that. . . . "As I have loved you, that ye love one another." "As I have loved you" . . . that makes all new. So also 1 John ii. 7, 8. The "old commandment" was old enough. Barbarians felt it in their hearts. But the same commandment with "true light" shining on it was different indeed.

"Love your neighbour, hate your enemy." Carthaginians obeyed that. Hear the Law of Love expounded by Himself. Matt. v. 44, 46—"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. . . . For if ye love them which love you, what do ye more than others? Do not even . . . (the barbarians) . . . the same?" This is Christianity: that is, the Mind of Christ.

Remark, too, the principle on which this is taught. Matt. v. 45—"That ye may be the children of your Father which s in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Not upon merely personal authority; not by a law graven on tone: nor even printed in a book, to be referred to, chapter nd verse; but on the principle of the imitation of God. His eart interpreted the universe—He read its "open secret," which is open to all who have the heart to feel it, secret to ll others. A secret, according to Him, to be gathered from he rain as it fell on the just and the unjust, from the dew f heaven, from the lily, and from the fowls of the air, from he wheat, from every law and every atom. This was His Revelation. He revealed God. He spelled for us the neaning of all this perplexing unintelligible world. He proclaimed its hidden meaning to be Love. So He converted ude barbarian instincts into Christian graces, by expanding neir sphere and purifying them of selfishness—causing them o be regulated by principle, and elevating them into a concious imitation of God in His revealed character.

II. The Barbarian idea of retribution.

The Apostle Paul was one of those who are formed to be he leaders of the world. Foremost in persecution—foremost in Christianity, ("nothing behind the chiefest apostles")—foremost in the shipwreck, his voice the calmest, his heart ne stoutest, his advice the wisest in the tumult. Foremost, oo, when all was over, not as a prisoner, but actively ngaged for the general good, it is Paul who is gathering the ticks to make the fire. From those sticks a viper sprung nd fastened on his hand, and the first impression of the arbarians was, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, nough he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not o live."

This is the very basis of all natural religion: the idea of ne connexion between guilt and retribution. In some orm or other it underlies all mythologies. The sleepless, ever-dying avengers of wrong—the Nemesis who presides

over retribution—the vengeance which suffereth not the murderer to live—the whips and scorpions of the Furies—it seems the first instinct of religion.

In the barbarian conception of it, however, there was something gross, corporeal, and dangerous.

Because they misinterpreted natural laws into vengeance. Yet there is a proneness in man to judge so. We expect that nature will execute the chastisements of the spiritual world. Hence all nature becomes to the imagination leagued against the transgressor. The stars in their courses fight against Sisera. The wall of Siloam falls on guilty men. The sea will not carry the criminal, nor the plank bear him—the viper stings—everything is a minister of wrath. On this conviction nations constructed their trial by ordeal. The guilty man's sword would fail in the duel: and the foot would strike and be burnt by the hot ploughshare. Some idea of this sort lurks in all our minds. We picture to ourselves the spectres of the past haunting the nightly bed of the tyrant. We take for granted that there is an avenger making life miserable.

But experience corrects all this. The tyrant's sleep is often as sweet and sound as the infant's. The sea will wreck an apostle and bear a murderer triumphantly. The viper stings the innocent turf-cutter. The fang of evil pierces the heel of the noblest as he treads it down. It is the poetry of man's heart, not the reality of the universe, which speaks of the Vengeance which pursues guilt with unrelenting steps to slay. Only in poetry is this form of justice found. Only in poetry does the fire refuse to burn the innocent. Only in poetry can Purity lay her hand on the fawning lion's mane. If we ask where these Melitans got their idea of Retribution, the reply is, out of their own hearts. They felt the eternal connexion between wrong-doing and penalty. The penalty they would have executed on murder was death. They naturally threw this idea of theirs into the character of God, and blended together what was theirs and what is His. This is valuable as a proof of the instinctive testimony of man's heart to the realities of Retribution. It is utterly worthless as a testimony to the

form in which Retributive Justice works, because it is not borne out by the facts of life.

Again, that notion was false, in that it expected vengeance for flagrant crime only. "This man is a murderer." There is a common and superstitious feeling now to that effect, "Murder will out:" as if God had set a black mark on murder—as if, because it is unlikely to escape detection in a country where every man's hand is against the murderer, impunity was not common enough in countries where human life is held cheap. The truth is, we think much of crime, little of sin. There is many a murderer executed whose heart is pure and whose life is white, compared with those of many a man who lives a respectable and even honoured life. David was a murderer. The Pharisees had committed no crime; but their heart was rotten at the core. There was in it the sin which has no forgiveness. It is not a Christian but a Barbarian estimate, which ranks crime above sin, and takes murder for the chief of sins marked out for Heaven's vengeance.

As information increased, *this* idea of retribution disappears. Natural laws are understood, and retribution vanishes. Then often comes Epicureanism or Atheism. "All things come alike to all: there is one end to the righteous and to the sinner; to the clean and to the unclean: to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not." This is the feeling of the voluptuary of Ecclesiastes. If so, then the inference suggests itself to Epicurean indolence—"Let us eat and drink"—it is all the same. Or the sceptical feeling comes thus: "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." For assuredly there is no vengeance such as this which suffers not the murderer to live, but arms the powers of nature against him. Therefore why do right instead of wrong?

Then the idea of Retribution is gone for those who see no deeper than the outward chance of penalty.

The Advent brought deeper and truer views. It taught what sin is, and what suffering is. It showed the Innocent on the Cross bearing the penalty of the world's sin, but

Himself still the Son of God, with whom the Father was not angry, but "well pleased."

The penal agonies of sin are chiefly those which are executed within. "Vengeance," said the *Melitans*, "suffereth not the murderer to live." "Whosoever slayeth Cain," said *God*, "vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." Cain, the murderer, lives—CHRIST, the holy, dies. Cain is to us the dread type of Hell. To live! that is Hell, to live when you fain would die. There is such a thing as being salted with fire, a never annihilating but still consuming torture. You may escape the viper and the wreck. You may by prudence make this world painless, more or less. You cannot escape yourself. Go where you will, you carry with you a soul degraded, its power lost, its finer sensibilities destroyed. Worse than the viper's tooth is the punishment of no longer striving after goodness, or aspiring after the life of God. Just as the man cannot see through the glass on which he breathes, sin darkens the windows of the soul. You cannot look out even to know the glories of the fair world from which your soul excludes itself. There is no punishment equal to the punishment of being base. To sink from sin to sin, from infamy to infamy, that is the fearful retribution which is executed in the spiritual world. You are safe, go where you will, from the viper: as safe as if you were the holiest of God's children. The fang is in your soul.

III. The Barbarian conception of Deity.

When the viper fell off, and Paul was left uninjured, they changed their mind and said that he was a god.

1. Observe, first, this implied a certain advance in religious notions. There is a stage of worship prior to that of man-worship. Man finds himself helpless among the powers of nature, and worships the forces themselves which he finds around him. This takes different forms. The highest is the worship of that host of heaven from which Job professed himself to be free. With some it is the adoration of lifeless things: the oak which has been made sacred by the lightning-

roke: the "meteoric stone" which fell down from Jupiter. o the Israelites adored the brazen serpent, with which ower had once been in connexion. Evidently there can e no holy influence in this. Men worship them by fear, rtify themselves by charms and incantations: do not try please God by being holy, but defend themselves from nger by jugglery. The Christians of the early ages carried out bits of consecrated bread to protect themselves from ipwreck.

Besides this, men have worshipped brute life: some imal, exhibiting a limited quality, which is yet reckoned a pe of the Divine. The hawk-eyed deities of Egypt, for stance, implied omniscience. Beast-worship was that of gypt. Israel learned it there, and in an early stage of their story, imitated the highest form which they knew, that of pis, in their golden calf.

It is quite clear that the Melitans were in a stage beyond is. It is a step when men rise from the worship of lifeless ings to that of animals—another when they rise to worship man qualities; for they *are* nearest the Divine. Perhaps tep higher still, when, like the early Romans, they worship Principle like Destiny, separate from all shape. They re in the stage of worshipping what is human.

2. But in this worship of the human, we have to distinish that it was the adoration of the marvellous—not the verence for the Good. It was not Paul's character to hich they yielded homage. It was only to the wonderful ystery of, as they supposed, miraculous escape. So, too, Lystra. It was the miracle which they chiefly saw.

All that would pass away when they knew that he was a an of like passions with themselves: or when they were formed that it was a Providential escape which might have ppened to any ordinary man. When the savage sees the sh of European firearms, he kneels as to a god: but when has learned its use, his new religion is gone. When the nericans first saw the winged ships of Spain, they thought at the deities spoke in thunder; but when they discovered e secret of their humanity, the worship ceased. And thus

science is every day converting the religion of mere wonder into Atheism. The mere worship of the mysterious has but a limited existence. As you teach laws, you undermine *that* religion. Men cease to tremble. The Laplander would no longer be awed by the eclipse if he knew how to calculate it with unerring accuracy. The savage's dread of lightning as the bolt of God, is over when he sees the philosopher draw it from the clouds, and experimentalize on it in his laboratory. The awe created by a pestilence is passed, when it is found to be strictly under the guidance of natural laws. And the Romanist, or the semi-Romanist, whose religion is chiefly a sense of the mysterious, the solemn, and the awful, and whose flesh creeps when he sees a miracle in the consecration of the sacraments, ends, as is well known, in infidelity, when enlightenment and reason have struck the ground of false reverence from beneath his feet.

It is upon this indisputable basis that the mightiest system of modern Atheism has been built. The great founder of that system divides all human history into three periods. The first, in which the supernatural is believed in; and a personal Agent is believed in as the cause of all phenomena. The second, in which metaphysical abstractions are assumed as Causes. The third, the Positive stage, in which nothing is expected but the knowledge of sequences by Experience; the Absolute, that lies beneath all phenomena, being for ever unknowable, and a God, if there be a God, undiscoverable by the intellect of man.

This conclusion is irrefragable. Granted that the only basis of religion is awe, a worship of the marvellous—then verily, there remains nothing for the human race to end in but blank and ghastly Atheism.

Therefore has the Redeemer's Advent taught a deeper truth to man. The Apostle Paul spoke almost slightingly of the marvellous. "Covet earnestly the best gifts: yet show I unto you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Love is diviner than all wondrous powers.

So too, the Son of God came into this world, depreciating ne merely mysterious. "An evil and adulterous generation eeketh after a sign. No sign shall be given to it." "Except e see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Nay, His wn miracles themselves, so far as the merely wondrous in nem was concerned, He was willing on one occasion at east, to place on the same level with the real or supposed nes of Exorcists among themselves. "If I by Beelzebub ast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out?" It as not the power, nor the supernatural in them, which roved them divine. It was their peculiar character; their enevolence: their goodness: their love, which manifested Deity.

Herein lies the vast fallacy of the French sceptic. The orship of the Supernatural must legitimately end in theism as science progresses. Yes, all science removes he Cause of causes further and further back from human en,—so that the baffled intellect is compelled to confess t last we cannot find It. But "the world by wisdom new not God." There is a power in the soul, quite eparate from the intellect, which sweeps away or recognises ne marvellous, by which God is felt. Faith stands erenely far above the reach of the Atheism of Science. t does not rest on the Wonderful, but on the Eternal Visdom and Goodness of God. The Revelation of the Son as to proclaim a Father, not a Mystery. No science can weep away the Everlasting Love which the *heart* feels, and hich the intellect does not even pretend to judge or ecognise. And he is safe from the inevitable decay which ttends the mere barbarian worship, who has felt, that as aith is the strongest power in the mind of man, so is Love he Divinest principle in the bosom of God: in other words, e who adores God as known in Christ, rather than trembles efore the Unknown: whose homage is yielded to Divine Character rather than to Divine Power.

CHRISTIANITY AND HINDOOISM

DEUTERONOMY vi. 4, 5.—"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.—And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

IT is my intention, in giving the present course of lectures, to consider the Advent of our Lord in connection with the cause of missionary labours. This connection is clear. His Advent is the reign of God in the hearts of men; and it is the aim of the missionary to set up that kingdom in men's hearts. There is also a more indirect connection between the two, because at this time, the Church Missionary Society is celebrating its jubilee. It is now fifty years since the first mission was established at Sierra Leone, where, although they who composed that little band were swept off one after another by jungle fever—their groans unheard, themselves unwept, and almost unhonoured—yet there rose up other labourers after them; and a firm footing was at length gained in that dark heathen land.

On the Epiphany of next year we are to celebrate this jubilee in Brighton; and it has seemed to me a good preparation, that we should occupy, in thought, some field of missionary exertion, and look at the difficulties which those have had to contend against, who have gone out in that work. There can be no doubt as to which shall be first chosen for our contemplation. India, with its vast territories and millions of people, comes first, both as being one of our own possessions, and by the heavy responsibilities attaching to us on account of it.

We propose, therefore, to give some account of Hindoo superstition; and here I would remark, there are three ways of looking at idolatry.

I. There is the way of the mere *scholar*—that of men

who read about it as the schoolboy does, as a thing past—curious, but worn-out system. This scholastic spirit is the worst; for it treats the question of religious worship as a piece of antiquarianism, of no vital consequence, but just curious and amusing.

II. There is the view taken by the religious *partisan*. There are some men who, thinking their religion right, determine, therefore, that every one who differs from them is wrong. They look with scorn and contempt on the religion of the Hindoo, and only think how they may force theirs upon him. In this spirit, the world can never be evangelized. A man may say to another, "I cannot understand your believing such folly," but he will not convince him so of his error. It is only by entering into the mind and difficulties of the heathen that we can learn how to meet them and treat them effectually.

III. There is the way of enlightened Christianity. In this spirit stood St. Paul on the Hill at Athens. The beauty of Greek worship was nothing to him. To him it was still idolatry, though it was enlightened; but he was not hard enough not to be able to feel for them. He did not denounce it to them as damnable: he showed them that they were feeling after God, but blindly, ignorantly, wrongly. "Whom ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you."

The religion on which we are going to dwell to-day is one of the most subtle the world has ever received. It has stood the test of long ages and of great changes. The Land has in turn submitted to the Macedonian, the Saracen, the Mahomedan conqueror; yet its civilization, and its ways of thinking, have remained always the same,—in stagnation. We marvel how it has happened that their religion has remained sufficient for them. Let us look at it.

I. We take, as the first branch of our subject,—The Hindoo conception of Divinity. We start with the assertion, that the god whom a man worships is but the reflection of

himself. Tell us what a man's mind is, and we will tell you what his god is. Thus, amongst the Africans, the lowest and most degraded of mankind, forms of horror are reverenced. The frightful, black, shapeless god, who can be frightened by the noise of a drum, is their object of worship.

Our Scandinavian forefathers, whose delight was in the battle and the sea-fight, worshipped warlike gods, whose names still descend to us in the names given to the days of the week; they expected after death the conqueror's feast in Walhalla, the flowing cup, and the victor's wreath. Look at Christianity itself. We profess to worship the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we do not all worship the same God. The God of the child is not the God of the man. He is a beneficent being—an enlarged representation (to him) of his own father. The man whose mind is cast in a stern mould worships a God, who sits above to administer justice and punishment. The man who shrinks from the idea of suffering worships a placable God, who combines the greatest possible amount of happiness for the race with the least possible amount of pain.

[Now, consider the man who worships God as He appears in Jesus Christ.]

There are two things distinctly marked in the Hindoo religion:—The love of physical repose; and mental activity, restlessness, and subtlety. Theirs are ideas passing through trains of thought which leave our European minds marvelling in astonishment.

Their first principle is that of God's unity. We are told by some that they have many gods, but all those who have deeply studied the subject agree in this—that they really have but *one*. This Hindoo deity is capable of two states—1. Inaction; 2. Action. The first state is that of a dreamless sleep, unconscious of its own existence; all attributes have passed away—it is infinite nothing. We remark in men generally a desire for *rest;* in the Hindoo it is a desire merely for indolence. Far deeper lodged in the human breast than the desire of honour or riches, is seated the

desire for rest: there are, doubtless, eager, earnest spirits, who may scorn pleasure, but, nevertheless, they long for rest. Well and rightly has the Hindoo thrown this idea on God; but he has erred in the character of that repose. There are two kinds of rest:—1st. There is the rest desired by the world. 2nd. There is the rest we find in Christ. The active mind, if out of its proper sphere, corrodes itself, and frets itself with plans and projects, finding no rest. The rest of Christ is not that of torpor, but harmony; it is not refusing the struggle, but conquering *in it;* not resting *from* duty, but finding rest *in* duty.

The Sabbaths of Eternity have kept the Supreme Mind in infinite blessedness: on our restless, unquiet, throbbing hearts, God has been looking down, serene and calm. When chaos took lovely form and shape, then that Rest began—not in the torpor of inaction, but in harmonious work. "My Father worketh hitherto." God works in all the smallest objects of creation, as well as in the largest. Even in midnight stillness harmonious action is the law; when everything seems to slumber, all is really at work, for the spirit of life and the spirit of death are weaving and unweaving for ever.

We remark that to this god of Hindostan there rises no temple throughout the length and breadth of the land. If you ask in astonishment, why is this? the Hindoo replies, "Pure, unmixed Deity is *mind*, and cannot be confined to place;" and well does he here teach us that God is a Spirit: but in his idea there is an exhibition of a god without qualities—a deity whom man may meditate on, and be absorbed in, but not one to be loved or adored.

Here is his first error; here we can teach him something —that God is a Personal Being.

Personality is made up of three attributes—Consciousness, Character, Will. Without the union of these three, the idea is imperfect. Personality the Hindoo Deity has none; therefore he cannot be loved.

Now when we look at God as revealed in Jesus Christ, He appears as having a mind like ours; the ideas of

number, of right and wrong, of sanctity, are to God precisely what they are to man. Conceive a mind without these, and it may be a high and lofty one, but there can be no communion with it. But when Christ speaks of love, of purity, of holiness, we feel that it is no abstraction we worship.

II. We shall consider as the second branch of our subject the Hindoo theory of creation.

We have spoken of the Hindoo Deity as capable of two states—that of perfection, or rest; that of imperfection, or unrest. The Hindoo thinks that a time arrives when rest becomes action, and slumber becomes life; and when, not willing to be alone, feeling solitary in his awaking, God wishes to impart life; therefore He creates.

Here again, we recognise a partial truth. In the Scriptures we never read of a time when God was alone. What is love but this, to find ourselves again in another? The "Word," we read, "was with God" before the world began. What the word is to the thought, that is Christ to God. Creation was one expression of this—of His inmost feelings of beauty and loveliness; whether it be the doleful sighings of the night-wind, or the flower that nestles in the grass, they tell alike of Love. So has He also shown that Love on earth, in the outward manifestation of the Life of Christ—not only in the translated Word which we have—beautiful as it is, but in the living Word. Read without *this*, history is a dark, tangled web, philosophy a disappointing thing. Without *this* light, society is imperfect, and the greatest men small and insignificant. From all these we turn to Christ; *here* is that perfect Word, where no one syllable is wrong, to which our hearts echo.

There are two Hindoo theories of creation—the gross view held by the many; the refined one held by the philosopher and the Brahmin. Yet these two so mix and intermingle that it is difficult to give to European minds a clear notion of either of them separately. We will leave the popular view for another time, and we will try to deal now with the metaphysical and transcendental one. It is this—creation is

illusion—the Deity awaking from sleep. The universe is God: God is the universe: therefore He cannot create. The Hindoo says, you, and I, and all men, are but gods—ourselves in a wretched state of dream and illusion. We must try to explain this in part by our own records of times which we can all remember, when we have lain in a state between dreaming and waking—a phantasmagoric state, changing, combining, altering, like the kaleidoscope, so that we hardly knew realities from unrealities. "Such," says the Hindoo, "is your life—a delusion." I merely tell of this because it colours all Hindoo existence: the practical results we shall consider another time. For this the visionary contemplator of Brahm, and the Fakeer, sit beneath the tree, scarcely eating, speaking, or thinking; hoping at length to become absorbed into that calm, dreamless, passive state, which to them represents perfection.

One truth we find acknowledged in this theory is the unreality of this world. Nobly has the Hindoo set forth the truth that the world is less real than the spirit. "What is your life? it is even a vapour" (James iv. 14). Ask you what we are to live for? The child, on whose young face the mother now gazes so tenderly, changes with years into the man with furrowed brow and silvered hair; constitutions are formed and broken, friendships pass, love decays, who can say he possesses the same now that blessed him in his early life? All passes whilst we look upon it. A most unreal, imaginative life. The spirit of life ever weaving—the spirit of death ever unweaving; all things putting on change.

In conclusion—

We observe here a great truth—the evil of self-consciousness. This self-consciousness is all evil. He who can dwell on this and that symptom of his moral nature is already diseased. We are too much haunted by ourselves; we project the spectral shadow of ourselves on everything around us. And then comes in the Gospel to rescue us from this selfishness. Redemption is this, to forget self in God. Does not the mother forget herself for a time in the

child ; the loyal man in his strong feelings of devotion for his sovereign ? So does the Christian forget himself in the feeling that he has to live here for the performance of the Will of God.

[And now contrast the Hindoo religion with the Christian.]

The Hindoo tells us the remedy for this unreality is to be found in the long unbroken sleep. The Christian tells us the remedy is this, that this broken dream of life shall end in a higher life. Life is but a sleep, a dream, and death is the real awaking.

VICTORY OVER DEATH

1 Corinthians xv. 56, 57.—"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

On Sunday last I endeavoured to bring before you the subject of that which Scripture calls the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. The two points on which we were trying to get clear notions were these : what is meant by being under the law, and what is meant by being free from the law ? When the Bible says that a man led by the Spirit is not under the law, it does not mean that he is free because he may sin without being punished for it, but it means that he is free because being taught by God's Spirit to love what His law commands, he is no longer conscious of acting from restraint. The law does not drive him, because the Spirit leads him.

There is a state, brethren, when we recognise God, but do not love God in Christ. It is that state when we admire

what is excellent, but are not able to perform it. It is a state when the love of good comes to nothing, dying away in a mere desire. That is the state of nature, when we are under the law, and not converted to the love of Christ. And then there is another state, when God writes His law upon our hearts by love instead of fear. The one state is this, "I cannot do the things that I would"—the other state is this, "I will walk at liberty; for I seek Thy commandments."

Just so far, therefore, as a Christian is led by the Spirit, he is a conqueror. A Christian in full possession of his privileges is a man whose very step ought to have in it all the elasticity of triumph, and whose very look ought to have in it all the brightness of victory. And just so far as a Christian suffers sin to struggle in him and overcome his resolutions, just so far he is under the law. And that is the key to the whole doctrine of the New Testament. From first to last the great truth put forward is—The law can neither save you nor sanctify you. The gospel can do both; for it is rightly and emphatically called the perfect law of liberty.

We proceed to-day to a further illustration of this subject—of Christian victory. In the verses which I have read out, the Apostle has evidently the same subject in his mind; slavery through the law: victory through the gospel. "The strength of sin," he says, "is the law." God giveth us the victory through Christ. And when we are familiar with St. Paul's trains of thinking, we find this idea coming in perpetually. It runs like a coloured thread through embroidery, appearing on the upper surface every now and then in a different shape—a leaf, it may be, or a flower; but the same thread still, if you only trace it back with your finger. And this was the golden recurring thread in the mind of Paul. Restraint and law cannot check sin; they only gall it and make it struggle and rebel. The love of God in Christ, that, and only that can give man the victory.

But in this passage the idea of victory is brought to bear

upon the most terrible of all a Christian's enemies. It is faith here conquering in death. And the apostle brings together all the believer's antagonists—the law's power, sin, and death the chief antagonist of all; and then, as it were on a conqueror's battle field, shouts over them the hymn of triumph—"Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

We shall take up these two points to dwell upon.

I. The awfulness which hangs round the dying hour.
II. Faith conquering in death.

That which makes it peculiarly terrible to die is asserted in this passage to be, guilt. We lay a stress upon this expression—the sting. It is not said that sin is the only bitterness, but it is the sting which contains in it the venom of a most exquisite torture. And in truth, brethren, it is no mark of courage to speak lightly of human dying. We may do it in bravado, or in wantonness; but no man who thinks can call it a trifling thing to die. True thoughtfulness must shrink from death without Christ. There is a world of untold sensations crowded into that moment, when a man puts his hand to his forehead and feels the damp upon it which tells him his hour is come. He has been waiting for death all his life, and now it is come. It is all over—his chance is past, and his eternity is settled. None of us know, except by guess, what that sensation is. Myriads of human beings have felt it to whom life was dear; but they never spoke out their feelings, for such things are untold. And to every individual man throughout all eternity that sensation in its fulness can come but once. It is mockery, brethren, for a man to speak lightly of that which he cannot know till it comes.

Now the first cause which makes it a solemn thing to die, is the instinctive cleaving of every thing that lives to its own existence. That unutterable thing which we call our being —the idea of parting with it is agony. It is the first and the intensest desire of living things, to be. Enjoyment,

blessedness, every thing we long for, is wrapped up in being. Darkness and all that the spirit recoils from, is contained in his idea, not to be. It is in virtue of this unquenchable impulse that the world, in spite of all the misery that is in it, continues to struggle on. What are war, and trade, and labour, and professions? Are they all the result of struggling to be great? No, my brethren, they are the result of struggling *to be*. The first thing that men and nations labour for is existence. Reduce the nation or the man to their last resources, and only see what marvellous energy of contrivance the love of being arms them with. Read back the pauper's history at the end of seventy years —his strange sad history, in which scarcely a single day could ensure subsistence for the morrow—and yet learn what he has done these long years in the stern struggle with impossibility to hold his being where everything is against him, and to keep an existence, whose only conceivable charm is this, that it *is* existence.

Now it is with this intense passion for being, that the idea of death clashes. Let us search why it is we shrink from death. This reason, brethren, we shall find, that it presents to us the idea of *not being*. Talk as we will of immortality, there is an obstinate feeling that we cannot master, that we end in death; and *that* may be felt together with the firmest belief of a resurrection. Brethren, our faith tells us one thing, and our sensations tell our another. When we die, we are surrendering in truth all that with which we have associated existence. All that we know of life is connected with a shape, a form, a body of materialism; and now that that is palpably melting away into nothingness, the boldest heart may be excused a shudder, when there is forced upon it, in spite of itself, the idea of ceasing for ever,

The second reason is not one of imagination at all, but most sober reality. It is a solemn thing to die, because it is the parting with all round which the heart's best affections have twined themselves. There are some men who have not the capacity for keen enjoyment. Their affections have

nothing in them of intensity, and so they pass through life without ever so uniting themselves with what they meet, that there would be anything of pain in the severance. Of course, with them the bitterness of death does not attach so much to the idea of parting. But, my brethren, how is it with human nature generally? Our feelings do not weaken as we go on in life; emotions are less shown, and we get a command over our features and our expressions; but the man's feelings are deeper than the boy's. It is length of time that makes attachment. We become wedded to the sights and sounds of this lovely world more closely as years go on. Young men, with nothing rooted deep, are prodigal of life. It is an adventure to them, rather than a misfortune, to leave their country for ever. With the old man it is like tearing his own heart from him. And so it was that when Lot quitted Sodom, the younger members of his family went on gladly. It is a touching truth; it was the aged one who looked behind to the home which had so many recollections connected with it. And therefore it is, that when men approach that period of existence when they must go, there is an instinctive lingering over things which they shall never see again. Every time the sun sets, every time the old man sees his children gathering round him, there is a filling of the eye with an emotion that we can understand. There is upon his soul the thought of parting, that strange wrench from all we love which makes death (say what moralists will of it) a bitter thing.

Another pang which belongs to death, we find in the sensation of loneliness which attaches to it. Have we ever seen a ship preparing to sail with its load of pauper emigrants to a distant colony? If we have, we know what that desolation is which comes from feeling unfriended on a new and untried excursion. All beyond the seas, to the ignorant poor man, is a strange land. They are going away from the helps and the friendships and the companionships of life, scarcely knowing what is before them. And it is in such a moment, when a man stands upon a deck, taking his last look of his fatherland, that there comes upon him a

sensation new, strange, and inexpressibly miserable—the feeling of being alone in the world. Brethren, with all the bitterness of such a moment, it is but a feeble image when placed by the side of the loneliness of death. We die alone. We go on our dark mysterious journey for the first time in all our existence, without one to accompany us. Friends are beside our bed, they must stay behind. Grant that a Christian has something like familiarity with the Most High, *that* breaks this solitary feeling; but what is it with the mass of men? It is a question full of loneliness to them. What is it they are to see? What are they to meet? Is it not true that, to the larger number of this congregation, there is no one point in all eternity on which the eye can fix distinctly and rest gladly—nothing beyond the grave, except a dark space into which they must plunge alone?

And yet, my brethren, with all these ideas no doubt vividly before his mind, it was none of them that the apostle selected as the crowning bitterness of dying. It was not the thought of surrendering existence. It was not the parting from all bright and lovely things. It was not the shudder of sinking into the sepulchre alone. "The sting of death is *sin*."

Now there are two ways in which this deep truth applies itself. There is something that appals in death when there are distinct separate acts of guilt resting on the memory; and there is something, too, in the possession of a guilty heart, which is quite another thing from acts of sin, that makes it an awful thing to die. There are some who carry about with them the dreadful secret of sin that has been done; guilt that has a name. A man has injured some one; he has made money, or got on by unfair means; he has been unchaste; he has done some of those thousand things of life which leave upon the heart the dark spot that will not come out. All these are sins which you can count up and number. And the recollection of things like these is that agony which we call remorse. Many of us have remembrances of this kind which are fatal to serenity. We shut

them out, but it will not do. They bide their time, and then suddenly present themselves, together with the thought of a judgment-seat. When a guilty man begins to think of dying, it is like a vision of the Son of Man presenting itself and calling out the voices of all the unclean spirits in the man—"Art thou come to torment us before the time?"

But, my brethren, it is a mistake if we suppose that is the common way in which sin stings at the thought of death. Men who have lived the career of passionate life have distinct and accumulated acts of guilt before their eyes. But with most men it is not guilty acts, but guiltiness of heart, that weighs the heaviest. Only take yesterday as a specimen of life. What was it with most of us? A day of sin. Was it sin palpable and dark, such as we shall remember painfully this day year? Nay, my brethren, unkindness, petulance, wasted time, opportunities lost, frivolous conversation, that was our chief guilt. And yet with all that, trifling as it may be, when it comes to be the history of life, does it not leave behind a restless undefinable sense of fault, a vague idea of debt, but to what extent we know not, perhaps the more wretched just because it is uncertain? My Christian brethren, this is the sting of sinfulness, the wretched consciousness of an unclean heart. It is just this feeling, "God is not my friend; I am going on to the grave, and no *man* can say aught against me, but my heart is not right; I want a river like that which the ancients fabled—the river of forgetfulness—that I might go down into it and bathe, and come up a new man. It is not so much what I have done; it is what I am. Who shall save me from myself?" Oh, it is a desolate thing to think of the coffin when that thought is in all its misery before the soul. It is the sting of death.

And now let us bear one thing in mind, the sting of sin is not a constant pressure. It may be that we live many years in the world before a death in our own family forces the thought personally home. Many years before all those sensations which are so often the precursors of the tomb—

the quick short cough, lassitude, emaciation, pain—come in startling suddenness upon us in our young vigour, and make us feel what it is to be here with death inevitable to ourselves. And when those things become habitual, habit makes delicacy the same forgetful thing as health, so that neither in sickness, nor in health, is the thought of death a constant pressure. It is only now and then; but so often as death is a reality, the sting of death is sin.

Once more we remark, that all this power of sin to agonize is traced by the Apostle to the law—"the strength of sin is the law;" by which he means to say that sin would not be so violent if it were not for the attempt of God's law to restrain it. It is the law which makes sin strong. And he does not mean particularly the law of Moses. He means any law, and all law. Law is what forbids and threatens; law bears gallingly on those who want to break it. And St. Paul declares this, that no law, not even God's law, can make men righteous in heart, unless the Spirit has taught men's hearts to acquiesce in the law. It can only force out into rebellion the sin that is in them. It is so, brethren, with a nation's law. The voice of the nation must go along with it. It must be the expression of their own feeling, and then they will have it obeyed. But if it is only the law of a government, a law which is against the whole spirit of the people, there is first the murmur of a nation's disapprobation, and then there is transgression, and then, if the law be vindicated with a high hand, the next step is the bursting that law asunder in national revolution. And so it is with God's law. It will never control a man long who does not from his heart love it. First, comes a sensation of restraint, and then comes a murmuring of the heart; and last, there comes the rising of passion in its giant might, made desperate by restraint. That is the law giving strength to sin.

And therefore, brethren, if all we know of God be this, that He has made laws, and that it is terrible to break them; if all our idea of religion be this, that it is a thing of commands and hindrances—Thou shalt, and thou shalt not; we

are under the law, and there is no help for it. We *must* shrink from the encounter with death.

We pass to our second subject—Faith conquering in death.

And, before we enter upon this topic, there are two general remarks that we have to make. The first is, The elevating power of faith. There is nothing in all this world that ever led man on to real victory but faith. Faith is that looking forward to a future with something like certainty, that raises man above the narrow feelings of the present. Even in this life he is a greater man, a man of more elevated character, who is steadily pursuing a plan that requires some years to accomplish, than he who is living by the day. Look forward but ten years, and plan for it, live for it; there is something of manhood, something of courage required to conquer the thousand things that stand in your way. And therefore it is that faith, and nothing but faith, gives victory in death. It is that elevation of character which we get from looking steadily and for ever forward, till eternity becomes a real home to us, that enables us to look down upon the last struggle, and the funeral, and the grave, not as the great end of all, but only as something that stands between us and the end. We are conquerors of death when we are able to look beyond it.

Our second remark is for the purpose of fixing special attention upon this, that ours is not merely to be victory, it is to be victory through Christ. "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Victory, brethren, mere victory over death is no unearthly thing. You may get it by infidelity. Only let a man sin long enough, and desperately enough to shut judgment altogether out of his creed, and then you have a man who can bid defiance to the grave. It was so that our country's greatest infidel historian met death. He quitted the world without parade and without display. If we want a specimen of victory apart from Christ, we have it on his death-bed. He left all this strange world of restlessness, calmly, like an unreal show that must go to

eces, and he himself an unreality departing from it. A eptic can be a conqueror in death.

Or, again, mere manhood may give us a victory. He ho has only learned not to be afraid to die, has not learned uch. We have steel and nerve enough in our hearts to are anything. And, after all, it is a triumph so common as arcely to deserve the name. Felons die on the scaffold like en; soldiers can be hired by tens of thousands, for a few ence a day, to front death in its worst form. Every minute at we live sixty of the human race are passing away, and e greater part with courage—the weak, and the timid, as ell as the resolute. Courage is a very different thing from e Christian's victory.

Once more, brethren, necessity can make man conqueror er death. We can make up our minds to anything when once becomes inevitable. It is the agony of suspense that akes danger dreadful. History can tell us that men can ok with desperate calmness upon hell itself when once has become a certainty. And it is this after all, that mmonly makes the dying hour so quiet a thing. It is ore dreadful in the distance than in the reality. When man feels that there is no help, and he must go, he lays im down to die, as quietly as a tired traveller wraps himself his cloak to sleep. It is quite another thing from all this at Paul meant by victory.

In the first place, it is the prerogative of a Christian to be nquerer over Doubt. Brethren, do we all know what oubt means? Perchance not. There are some men who ave never believed enough to doubt. There are some who ave never thrown their hopes with such earnestness on the orld to come, as to feel anxiety for fear it should not all be ue. But every one who knows what Faith is, knows too, hat is the desolation of Doubt. We pray till we begin to sk, Is there one who hears, or am I whispering to myself? -We hear the consolation administered to the bereaved, nd we see the coffin lowered into the grave, and the thought omes, What if all this doctrine of a life to come be but the ream of man's imaginative mind, carried on from age to

age, and so believed, because it is a venerable superstition? Now Christ gives us victory over that terrible suspicion in two ways—first, He does it by His own resurrection. We have got a fact there that all the metaphysics about impossibility cannot rob us of. In moments of perplexity we look back to this. The grave has once, and more than once, at the Redeemer's bidding, given up its dead. It is a world fact. It tells us what the Bible means by our resurrection—not a spiritual rising into new holiness merely—that, but also something more. It means that in our own proper identity, we shall live again. Make that thought real, and God has given you, so far, victory over the grave through Christ.

There is another way in which we get the victory over doubt, and that is by living in Christ. All doubt comes from living out of habits of affectionate obedience to God. By idleness, by neglected prayer, we lose our power of realizing things not seen. Let a man be religious and irreligious at intervals—irregular, inconsistent, without some distinct thing to live for—it is a matter of impossibility that he can be free from doubts. He must make up his mind for a dark life. Doubts can only be dispelled by that kind of active life that realizes Christ. And there is no faith that gives a victory so steadily triumphant as that. When such a man comes near the opening of the vault, it is no world of sorrows he is entering upon. He is only going to see things that he has felt. For he has been living in heaven. He has his grasp on things, that other men are only groping after and touching now and then. Live above this world, brethren, and then the powers of the world to come are so upon you that there is no room for doubt.

Besides all this, it is a Christian's privilege to have victory over the fear of death. And here it is exceedingly easy to paint what after all is only the image-picture of a dying hour. It is the easiest thing to represent the dying Christian as a man who always sinks into the grave full of hope, full of triumph, in the certain hope of a blessed resurrection. Brethren, we must paint things in the sober colours of truth;

ot as they might be supposed to be, but as they are. Often at is only a picture. Either very few death-beds are nristian ones, or else triumph is a very different thing from nat the word generally implies. Solemn, subdued, full of ve and full of solemnity, is the dying hour generally of the oliest men; sometimes almost darkness—rapture is a rare ing, except in books and scenes.

Let us understand what really is the victory over fear. It ay be rapture or it may not. All that depends very much n temperament; and, after all, the broken words of a dying an are a very poor index of his real state before God. apturous hope has been granted to martyrs in peculiar oments. It is on record of a minister of our own Church, at his expectation of seeing God in Christ became so tense as his last hour drew near, that his physician was ompelled to bid him calm his transports, because in so xcited a state he could not die. A strange unnatural energy as imparted to his muscular frame by his nerves overstrung ith triumph. But, brethren, it fosters a dangerous feeling o take cases like those as precedents. It leads to that most rrible of all unrealities—the acting of a death-bed scene. Christian conqueror dies calmly. Brave men in battle do ot boast that they are not afraid. Courage is so natural o them that they are not conscious they are doing anything ut of the common way—Christian bravery is a deep, calm ning, unconscious of itself. There are more triumphant eath-beds than we count, if we only remember this—true earlessness makes no parade. Oh, it is not only in nose passionate effusions in which the ancient martyrs oke sometimes of panting for the crushing of their mbs by the lions in the amphitheatre, or of holding out eir arms to embrace the flames that were to curl round em—it is not then only that Christ has stood by His rvants, and made them more than conquerors:—there ay be something of earthly excitement in all that. Every ay His servants are dying modestly and peacefully—not word of victory on their lips; but Christ's deep triumph n their hearts—watching the slow progress of their own

decay, and yet so far emancipated from personal anxiety that they are still able to think and to plan for others, not knowing that they are doing any great thing. They die, and the world hears nothing of them; and yet theirs was the completest victory. They came to the battlefield, the field to which they had been looking forward all their lives, and the enemy was not to be found. There was no Foe to fight with.

The last form in which a Christian gets the victory over death is by means of his resurrection. It seems to have been this which was chiefly alluded to by the Apostle here for he says (verse 54), "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption . . . *then* shall come to pass the saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." And to say the truth, brethren, it is a rhetorical expression rather than a sober truth when we call anything, except the resurrection, victory over death. We may conquer doubt and fear when we are dying, but that is not conquering death. It is like a warrior crushed to death by a superior antagonist refusing to yield a groan, and bearing the glance of defiance to the last. You feel that he is an unconquerable spirit, but he is not the conqueror. And when you see flesh melting away, and mental power becoming infantine in its feebleness, and lips scarcely able to articulate, is there left one moment a doubt upon the mind, as to *who* is the conqueror in spite of all the unshaken fortitude there may be? The victory is on the side of Death, not on the side of the dying.

And, my brethren, if we would enter into the full feeling of triumph contained in this verse, we must just try to bear in mind what this world would be without the thought of a resurrection. If we could conceive an unselfish man looking upon this world of desolation with that infinite compassion which all the brave and good feel, what conception could he have but that of defeat, and failure, and sadness—the sons of man mounting into a bright existence, and one after another falling back into darkness and nothingness, like soldiers trying to mount an impracticable breach, and falling

back crushed and mangled into the ditch before the bayonets and the rattling fire of their conquerors. Misery and guilt, look which way you will, till the heart gets sick with looking at it. Brethren, until a man looks on evil till it seems to him almost like a real personal enemy rejoicing over the destruction that it has made, he can scarcely conceive the deep rapture which rushed into the mind of the Apostle Paul when he remembered that a day was coming when all this was to be reversed. A day was coming, and it was the day of reality for which he lived, ever present and ever certain, when this sad world was to put off *for ever* its changefulness and its misery, and the grave was to be robbed of its victory, and the bodies were to come forth purified by their long sleep. He called all this a victory, because he felt that it was a real battle that has to be fought and won before that can be secured. One battle has been fought by Christ, and another battle, most real and difficult, but yet a conquering one, is to be fought by us. He hath imparted to us the virtue of His wrestlings, and the strength of His victory. So that, when the body shall rise again, the power of the law to condemn is gone, because we have learned to love the law.

And now to conclude all this, there are but two things which remain to say. In the first place, brethren, if we would be conquerors, we must realize God's love in Christ. Take care not to be under the law. Constraint never yet made a conqueror: the utmost it can do is to make either a rebel or a slave. Believe that God loves you. He gave a triumphant demonstration of it in the Cross. Never shall we conquer self till we have learned *to love*. My Christian brethren, let us remember our high privilege. Christian life, so far as it deserves the name, is victory. We are not going forth to mere battle—we are going forth to conquer. To gain mastery over self, and sin, and doubt, and fear: till the last coldness, coming across the brow, tells us that all is over, and our warfare accomplished—that we are safe, the everlasting arms beneath us—that is our calling. Brethren beloved, do not be content with a slothful, dreamy, uncertain

struggle. You are to conquer, and the banner under which we are to win is not Fear, but Love. "The strength of sin is the law;" the victory is by keeping before us God in Christ.

Lastly, there is need of encouragement for those of us whose faith is not of the conquering, but the timid kind. There are some whose hearts will reply to all this, Surely victory is not always a Christian's portion. Is there no cold dark watching in Christian life—no struggle when victory seems a mockery to speak of—no times when light and life seem feeble, and Christ is to us but a name, and death a reality? "Perfect love casteth out fear," but who has it? Victory is by faith, but, oh God, who will tell us what this faith *is* that men speak of as a thing so easy; and how we are to get it! You tell us to pray for faith, but how shall we pray in earnest unless we first have the very faith we pray for?

My Christian brethren, it is just to this deepest cry of the human heart that it is impossible to return a full answer. All that is true. To feel Faith is the grand difficulty of life. Faith is a deep impression of God and God's love, and personal trust in it. It is easy to say "Believe and thou shalt be saved," but well we know it is easier said than done. We cannot say how men are to *get* faith. It is God's gift, almost in the same way that genius is. You cannot work *for* faith; you must have it first, and then work *from* it.

But, brethren beloved, we can say, Look up, though we know not how the mechanism of the will which directs the eye is to be put in motion; we can say, Look to God in Christ, though we know not how men are to obtain faith to do it. Let us be in earnest. Our polar star is the love of the Cross. Take the eye off that, and you are in darkness and bewilderment at once. Let us not mind what is past. Perhaps it is all failure, and useless struggle, and broken resolves. What then? Settle this first, brethren, Are you in earnest? If so, though your faith be weak and your struggles unsatisfactory, you may begin the hymn of triumph

now, for victory is pledged. "Thanks be to God, which" not *shall* give, but "*giveth* us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

SALVATION OUT OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH

ACTS ix. 36.—"Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did," &c.

ACTS x. 1.—"There was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band," &c.

Two events are connected with St. Peter's stay at Joppa: the miraculous restoration of Dorcas, and the vision which prepared for the reception of Cornelius into the Christian Church. The Apostle was at Lydda, when he was summoned by the news of the death of Dorcas to Joppa, about twelve miles distant. Now observe here the variety of the gifts which are bestowed upon the Christian Church. Four characters, exceedingly diverse, are brought before us in this ninth chapter: Paul, a man singularly gifted, morally and intellectually, with qualities more brilliant than almost ever fell to the lot of man; Peter, full of love and daring, a champion of the truth; Ananias, one of those disciples of the inward life whose vocation is sympathy, and who, by a single word, "Brother," restore light to those that sit in darkness and loneliness; lastly, Dorcas, in a humbler, but not less true sphere of divine goodness, clothing the poor with her own hands, practically loving and benevolent.

We err in the comparative estimate we form of great and small. Imagine a political economist computing the value of such a life as this of Dorcas. He views men in masses: considers the economic well-being of society on a large scale: calculates what is productive of the greatest good for the greatest number To him the few coats and garments

made for a few poor people would be an item in the world's well-being scarcely worthy of being taken into the reckoning. Let the historian estimate her worth. The chart of time lies unrolled before him. The fall of dynasties and the blending together of races, the wars and revolutions of nations that have successively passed across the world's stage—these are the things that occupy him. What are acts like hers in the midst of interests such as these and of contemplations so large? All this is beneath the dignity of history. Or again, let us summon a man of larger contemplations still. To the astronomer, lifting his clear eye to the order of the stars, this planet itself is but a speck. To come down from the universe to the thought of a tiny earth is a fell descent; but to descend to the thought of a humble female working at a few garments, were a fall indeed.

Now rise to the Mind of which all other minds are but emanations—and this conception of grand and insignificant is not found in His nature. Human intellect, as it rises to the great, neglects the small. The Eternal Mind condescends to the small; or rather, with It there is neither great nor small. It has divided the rings of the earthworm with as much microscopic care as the orbits in which the planets move: It has painted the minutest feather on the wing of the butterfly as carefully as It has hung the firmament with the silver splendour of the stars. Great and small are words which have only reference to us.

Further still—judging the matter by the heart, ascending to the Heart of God, there is another aspect of the subject—great belongs only to what is moral—Infinitude and Eternity are true of feelings rather than of magnitude, or space, or time. The mightiest distance that mind can conceive, calculable only by the arrow flight of light, can yet be measured. The most vast of all the cycles that imagination ever wanted for the ages that are gone by, can yet be estimated by number. But tell us, if you can, the measure of a single feeling. Find for us, if you can, the computation by which we may estimate a single spiritual affec-

tion. They are absolutely incommensurable—these things together, Magnitude and Feeling. Let the act of Dorcas be tried thus. When the world has passed away, and the dust thereof, "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The true Infinite, the real Eternal, is Love. When all that economist, historian, philosopher can calculate, is gone, the love of Dorcas will still be fresh, and living, in the eternity of the illimitable Mind.

Observe, once more, the memorial which she left behind her. When Peter went into the upper chamber, he was surrounded by the poor widows, who showed him weeping the garments she had made. This was the best epitaph: the tears of the poor.

There is a strange jar upon the mind in the funeral, when the world is felt to be going on as usual. Traffic and pleasure do not alter when our friend lies in the upper chamber. The great, busy world rolls on, unheeding, and our egotism suggests the thought, So will it be when I am not. This world, whose very existence seems linked with mine, and to subsist only in mine, will not be altered by my dropping out of it. Perhaps, a few tears, and then all that follow me and love me now will dry them up again. I am but a bubble on the stream: here to-day, and then gone. This is painful to conceive. It is one of the pledges of our immortality that we long to be remembered after death—it is quite natural. Now let us inquire into its justice.

Dorcas died regretted: she was worth regretting, she was worth being restored; she had not lived in vain, because she had not lived for herself. The end of life is not a thought, but an action—action for others. But you, why should you be regretted? Have you discovered spiritual truth, like Paul? Have you been brave and true in defending it, like Peter? or cheered desolate hearts by sympathy, like Ananias? or visited the widows and the fatherless in their affliction, like Dorcas? If you have, your life will leave a trace behind which will not soon be effaced from earth. But if not, what is your worthless, self-absorbed existence good for, but to be swept away, and forgotten as soon as

possible? You will leave no record of yourself on earth, except a date of birth, and a date of death, with an awfully significant blank between.

The second event connected with St. Peter's stay at Joppa was the conversion of Cornelius.

A new doctrine was dawning on the Church. It was the universality of the love of God. The great controversy in the early history of Christianity was, not the atonement, not predestination, not even, except at first, the Resurrection, but the admissibility of the Gentiles to the Church of Christ. It was the controversy between Christianity, the universal religion, and Judaism, the limited one. Except we bear this in mind, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles will be alike unintelligible to us.

The germ of this truth had been planted by Stephen. St. Paul was now raised up as his successor, to develop it still further. So that now a very important crisis had arrived. For it has been well observed, that had St. Peter's acceptance of this truth been delayed by leaving it to gradual mental growth, the effects would have been incalculably disastrous to Christianity. A new apostle had arisen, and a new church was established at Antioch (xi. 19--26); and had St. Peter and the rest been left in their reluctance to this truth, the younger apostle would have been necessarily the leader of a party to which the elder apostles were opposed, and the Church of Antioch would have been in opposition to the Church at Jerusalem: a timely miracle, worthy of God, prevented this catastrophe: at the very crisis of time St. Peter's mind too, was enlightened with the truth.

The vision was evidently in its form and in its direction the result of previous natural circumstances. The death of Stephen must have had its effect on the Apostle's mind. That truth for which he died, the transient character of Judaism, must have suggested strange new thoughts, to be pondered on and doubted of; add to this, the Apostle was in a state of hunger. In ecstasy, or trance, or vision, things meet for food presented themselves to his mental eye. Evidently the *form* in which this took place was shaped by

his physical cravings, the direction depended partly upon his previous thoughts concerning the opening question of the Church. But the eternal Truth, the spiritual verity conveyed by the vision, was clearly of a higher source. Here are the limits of the natural and the supernatural closely bordering on each other.

And this is only analogous to all our life. The human touches on the Divine, earth borders upon heaven—the limits are not definable. "I live," said St. Paul. Immediately after, he corrects himself: "yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Man's spirit prays: yet is it not "the Spirit making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered?" As if the mind of man were hardly to be distinguished from the mind of God. We are on the brink of the world unseen—on the very verge of the spirit-realm. Everywhere around us is God.

Now the contents of this vision were—a vessel let down from heaven, full of animals, domestic and wild, clean and unclean. This was let down from heaven, and taken up to heaven again. All had come from God, so that the truth conveyed was clear enough. These distinctions of clean and unclean were but conventional and artificial after all—temporal arrangements, not belonging to the unalterable. God had made all and given all. The analogy was not difficult to perceive. God is the Creator of mankind. He is the universal Father. All have come from Him. Sanctified by Him, there can be no man common or unclean.

Against even the first part of this St. Peter's mind revolted —"Not so, Lord." It is not a little remarkable that the two first to whom this expansive truth was revealed were bigoted men: St. Paul the Jewish, St. Peter the Christian bigot. For St. Peter was a Christian, yet a bigot still. Is this wonderful and rare? or are we not all bigots in our way, the largest-minded of us all? St. Peter was willing to admit a proselyte: the admission of an entire Gentile was a stumbling-block; afterwards he could admit a Gentile, but hesitated to eat with him. There are some of us who can

believe in the Christianity of those who are a little beyond our own Church pale; some who even dimly suspect that God may love the Jew; some, too, who will be ready, with qualifications, to acknowledge a benighted Roman Catholic for a brother; but how many of us are there who would not be startled at being told to love a Unitarian? how many who would not shrink from the idea as over-bold, that he who is blind to the Redeemer's Deity, yet loving Him with all his heart, may, perchance, have that love accepted in place of adoration, and that it may be at our peril that we call him "common or unclean?" Oh! there was a largeness in the heart of Christ, of which we have only dreamed as yet—a something, too, in these words, "God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean," which it will require, perhaps, ages to develop.

At the same, or nearly the same time when this was taking place at Joppa, a manifestation, somewhat similar, was going on at Cæsarea, a day's journey distant. Remark here the coincidence. There was an affinity, it seems, between the minds of these two men, Peter and Cornelius—a singular, mysterious sympathy. Nay, more than that, very shortly before, a similar phenomenon had been felt in the mind of St. Paul, more than a hundred miles off, in a valley near Damascus; concerning all which we can say little, except that it is very plain there is a great deal more going on upon earth than our ordinary life conceives of. In the scientific world, similar coincidences perpetually take place: discoveries, apparently unconnected, without any apparent link between the minds which make them, are announced from different parts of the world, almost simultaneously. No man, perhaps, has been altogether unconscious of mental sympathies, coincidences of thought, which are utterly inexplicable. All that I deduce from this is the solemn awfulness of the universe in which we live. We are surrounded by Mystery. Mind is more real than matter. Our souls and God are real. Of the reality of nothing else are we sure: it floats before us, a fantastic shadow-world. Mind acts on mind. The Eternal Spirit blends mind with

mind, soul with soul, and is moving over us all with His mystic inspiration every hour.

In Cæsarea there was a cohort of soldiers, the bodyguard of the governor who resided there. They were not, as was the case in other towns, provincial soldiers, but, being a guard of honour, were all Romans, called commonly the Italian Band. One of the centurions of this guard was Cornelius—"a devout man." A truth-loving, truth-seeking, truth-finding man; one of those who would be called in this day a restless, perhaps an unstable man; for he changed his religion twice. He had aspirations which did not leave him contented with Paganism. He found in Judaism a higher truth, and became a proselyte. In Judaism he was true to the light he had: he was devout, gave alms, and even influenced some of the soldiers of the guard, as it would appear (verse 7). The result was as might have been expected. "He that hath, to him shall be given." Give us such a man, and we will predict his history. He will be ever moving on; not merely changing, but moving on, from higher to higher, from light to light, from love to love, till he loses himself at last in the Fountain of Light and the Sea of Love. Heathenism, Judaism, Christianity. Not mere change, but true, ever upward progress. He could not rest in Judaism, nor anywhere else on earth.

To this man a voice said, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up as a memorial before God." Prayers—that we can understand; but alms—are then works, after all, that by which men become meritorious in the sight of God? To answer this, observe—Alms may assume two forms. They may be complete or incomplete. Alms complete—works which may be enumerated, estimated—deeds done and put in as so much purchase—ten times ten thousand such will never purchase heaven. But the way in which a holy man does his alms is quite different from this. In their very performance done as pledges of something more; done with a sense of incompleteness; longing to be more nearly perfect—they become so many aspirations rising up to God; sacrifices of thanksgiving, ever ascending like

clouds of incense, that rise and rise in increasing volumes, still dissatisfied and still aspiring. Alms in this way become prayers—the highest prayers; and all existence melts and resolves itself into a prayer. "Thy prayers and thine alms;" or if you will, "Thy prayers and thy prayers," are come up to be remembered; for what were his alms but devout aspirations of his heart to God? Thus, in the vision of the everlasting state which John saw in Patmos, the life of the redeemed presented itself as one eternal chant of grateful hallelujahs, hymned on harps whose celestial melodies float before the Throne for ever. A life of prayer is a life whose litanies are ever fresh acts of self-devoting love. There was no merit in those alms of Cornelius; they were only poor imperfect aspirations, seeking the Ear of God, and heard and answered there.

All this brings us to a question which must not be avoided—the salvability of the heathen world. Let us pronounce upon this, if firmly, yet with all lowliness and modesty.

There are men of whose tenderness of heart we cannot doubt, who have come to the conclusion that without doubt the heathen shall perish everlastingly. A horrible conclusion: and if it were true, no smile should ever again pass across the face of him who believes it. No moment can, with any possible excuse, be given to any other enterprise than their evangelization, if it be true that eternity shall echo with the myriad groans and agonies of those who are dropping into it by thousands in an hour. Such men, however, save their character for heart, at the expense of their consistency. They smile and enjoy the food and light just as gaily as others do. They are too affectionate for their creed; their system only binds their views; it cannot convert their hearts to its gloomy horror.

We lay down two principles:—No man is saved by merit, but only by faith. No man is saved, except in Christ. "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

But when we come to consider what is saving faith, we

nd it to be the broad principle of trust in God, above all isgivings, living for the invisible instead of the seen. In Iebrews xi. we are told that Noah was saved by faith. aith in what? In the atonement? or even in Christ? ay, but in the predicted destruction of the world by ater; the truth he had, not the truth he had not. And ie life he led in consequence, higher than that of the resent-seeking world around him, was the life of faith, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir the righteousness which is by faith." Salvation therefore, annexed to faith. Not necessarily faith in the Christian bject, but in the truth, so far as it is given. Does God k more?

Again: the Word revealed Itself to men before It was anifested in the flesh. Before this universe was called to being, when neither star nor planet was, the Father as not alone. From all eternity He contemplated Himself Another—Himself in Himself; else God had not been ove. For another is required for love. To lose and find neself again in another's being, that is love. Except this, e cannot conceive love possible to Him. But thus with ie other, which was His very Self; in language theological, ie Eternal Son in the bosom of the Father; God thrown to objectivity by Himself. There was a universe before reated universe existed; there was Love when as yet there as none except Himself on whom that affection could be rown; and the Expression of Himself to Himself, the verlasting Word, filled eternity with the anthem of the Divine Soliloquy. Now this Word expressed Itself to man efore It mingled Itself with flesh. "Before Abraham was, am." Read we not in the Old Testament of revelations ade to men in visions, trances, day dreams, sometimes in oices, articulate or inarticulate, sometimes in suggestions carcely distinguishable from their own thoughts? Moreover, recollect that the Bible contains only a record of ie Divine dealings with a single nation; His proceedings ith the minds of other peoples are not recorded. That rge other world—no less God's world than Israel was,

though in their bigotry the Jews thought Jehovah was their own exclusive property—scarcely is—scarcely could be named on the page of Scripture except in its external relation to Israel. But at times, figures as it were, cross the rim of Judaism, when brought in contact with it, and passing for a moment as dim shadows, do yet tell us hints of a communication and a revelation going on unsuspected. We are told, for example, of Job—no Jew, but an Arabian Emir, who beneath the tents of Uz contrived to solve the question to his heart which still perplexes us through life—the co-existence of Evil with Divine Benevolence; one who wrestled with God as Jacob did, and strove to know the shrouded Name, and hoped to find that it was Love. We find Naaman the Syrian, and Nebuchadnezzar the Babylonian, under the providential and loving discipline of God. Rahab the Gentile is saved by faith. The Syro-Phœnician woman by her sick daughter's bedside, amidst the ravings of insanity, recognizes, without human assistance, the sublime and consoling truth of a universal Father's love in the midst of apparent partiality. The "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" had not left them in darkness.

From all this we are constrained to the conviction that there is a Church on earth larger than the limits of the Church visible; larger than Jew, or Christian, or the Apostle Peter, dreamed; larger than our narrow hearts dare to hope even now. They whose soarings to the First Good, First Perfect, and First Fair, entranced us in our boyhood, and whose healthier aspirations are acknowledged yet as our instructors in the reverential qualities of our riper manhood—will our hearts *allow* us to believe that they have perished? Nay. "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." The North American Indian who worshipped the great Spirit, and was thereby sustained in a life more dignified than the more animalized men amongst his countrymen; the Hindoo who believed in the Rest of God, and in his imperfect way tried to "enter

to rest," not forgetting benevolence and justice—these all come, while "the children of the kingdom"—men no, with greater light, only did as much as they—"shall e cast out."

These, with an innumerable multitude whom no man n number, out of every kingdom, and tongue, and people, th Rahab and the Syro-Phœnician woman, have entered to that Church which has passed through the centuries, sorbing silently into itself all that the world ever had of eat, and good, and noble. They were those who fought e battle of good against evil in their day, penetrated into e invisible from the thick shadows of darkness which viroued them, and saw the open Vision which is manifested all, in every nation, who fear God and work righteousness. o all, in other words, who live devoutly towards God, and y love towards man. And they shall hereafter "walk in hite, for they are worthy." It may be that I err in is. It may be that this is all too daring. Little is vealed upon the subject, and we must not dogmatize. I ay have erred; and it may be all a presumptuous dream. ut if it be, God will forgive the daring of a heart whose ope has given birth to the idea; whose faith in this matter mply receives its substance and reality from things hoped r, and whose confidence in all this dark, mysterious world n find no rock to rest upon amidst the roaring billows of ncertainty, except "the length, and the breadth, and the epth, and the height, of the Love which passeth knowledge," nd which has filled the Universe with the fulness of His hrist.

END OF VOL. II.

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